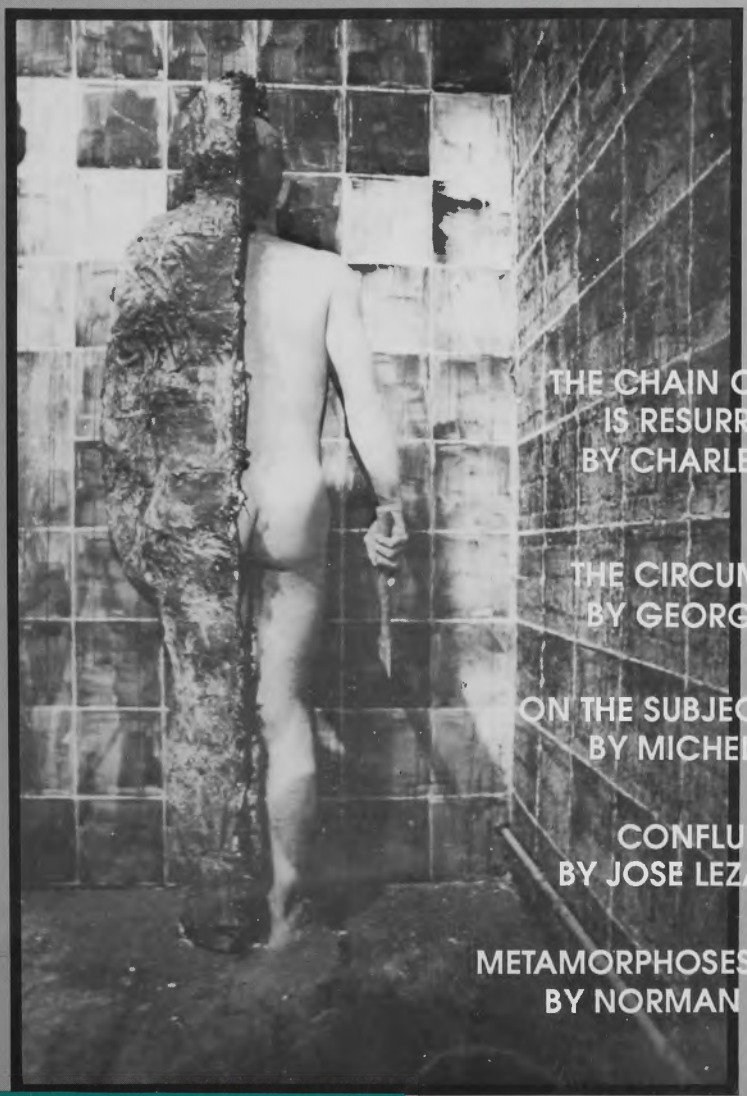
Sulfur 25



THE CHAIN OF MEMORY
IS RESURRECTION
BY CHARLES OLSON

THE CIRCUMSTANCES
BY GEORGE OPPEN

ON THE SUBJECT OF SHOAH
BY MICHEL DEGUY

CONFLUENCES
BY JOSE LEZAMA LIMA

METAMORPHOSES III: NARCISSUS
BY NORMAN O. BROWN

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Cusi Masuda, at 75 Hudson Street, photographed by Mieko Claig.

Charles Olson's poem is reprinted from *The Collected Poems of Charles Olson,* courtesy of University of California Press.

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CHARLES OLSON

The chain of memory is resurrection I am a vain man
I am interested in the size of the brain-case
of CroMagnon man and that his descendants are Guanches
right now in the Canary Islands, and that my father & mother
lie buried beside each other in the Swedish cemetery
in Worcester, Massachusetts. And my grandmother too.
Even if the Hineses are in St John's cemetery. Those stones
speak to me, my ear is their sea-shell as in Marin County
the big trees as well as the eucalyptus hold sounds
of Asia and Indians the myrtle, comes from Australia

The vector of space is resurrection. We walk on the earth
under which they lie who also matter to us, as well as those
who are distant, from whom we have got separated (as we are
separated from those we have not yet known: the loveliness
of man, that he shoots up men suddenly on the horizon
there is a new person who speaks as Ed Marshall does

and all the back country, the roads I have ridden
without headlights the moon was so bright on the houses
and I was coming from a love in Lawrence, and Georgetown
Rowley Ipswich lay out in the night, not blank at all as
now that Marshall has spoken, all the faces
and the stones
and Concord Avenue
rise into being: the onslaught,
he calls it,
resurrection

The being of man is resurrection, the genetic flow
of each life which has given life, the tenderness
none of us
is without. Let it come back. Let it be
where it is:
"My soul is Chichester and my origin
is a womb whether one likes it or not."

My ugliness,
said Juan Belmonte—to every Spaniard
I was part of himself:

the bull (or whether he's a lion
or a horse or the great snake)
hammers us, mine beat me against
the brick wall until I thought
this is it, and it was only a redheaded boy
diverted him

Direction—a directed magnitude—is
resurrection
All that has been
suddenly is: time
is the face
of recognition, Rhoda Straw; or my son
is a Magyar. The luminousness
of my daughter
to her mother
by a stream:
apocatastasis

how it occurs, that in this instant I seek to speak
as though the species were a weed-seed a grass a barley corn
in the cup of my palm. And I was trying
to hear what it said, I was putting my heart down
to catch the pain

Resurrection
is. It is the avowal. It is the admission. The renewal

is the restoration: the man in the dark with the animal
fat lamp
is my father. Or my grandfather. And the fat lady
who was weak from a heart attack and her granddaughter
I used to see courtin the boy on the motorcycle,
is my mother. Or my grandmother. The Venus
of Willendorf. We move
between two horns, the gate
of horn. And the animal or snake who warns us
propels: we must woo the thing
to get its feet together so that its shoulder blades
are open, so that the aorta

One of the horns
is resurrection, the other horn
is any one of us: a river
is my sword, the Annisquam is my metal
you will have yours (a meadow his was, gone,
boy, in the dance and another
had a tree or there was a third
had a bicycle seat, and the face of all women,
he said,
they sat on. Bless the powers
that be
        This is a poem of celebration of the powers that be.
The large theme
is the smallest (the thumbtack
in the way of the inkbottle, the incident
which does not change the course even if the surface
of the day is changed because a hand followed a diaper
into the wringer up to the elbow, the smallest content
is a grit of occasion, the irrelevant
is only known
like the shape of the soul
to the person involved, the absolutes
sit in the palm of the hand which can't close
from the pain. I do not know
what you know at the same time that I do. My vanity
is only the exercise

of my privilege as yours, conceivably,
might be as hers, the peahen, is
also brilliant when she takes it up: Willendorf,
the stone, breathes back
into life. The resurrection
at the farthest point, and

out of the green poison
now the death of spring the jungle
is in the gulley the growth
has gone to the tropics small spring
is over

small spring
  while where my river flows
spring is long. Here where the ice
and the jungle once were identical
spring is small

The blossoms
are already gone green green
the worst green
like paint floods
the sky
is like a bedroom wall
in a motel

The horrors
of season too fast.
Without resurrection
all is too fast. The trees
crawl over everything like facts
like the fascination of irrelevant
events: to hew

o the dirty summer too early
for a man to catch up with

spring is dead! spring the horn
is dead. I Adonis

Lift me, life of being

I lift
the shape of my soul. In the face of spring
gone
into the growth
as the body was burned
on the sticks and went up
as smoke into the pale sky
o father

o mother
put into the ground

(o the beloved ones

they must dance

the thick green
which covers us, the appetite of nature
we stand off, the loss
of loss

In the chain of being
we arise, we make sparse
the virid covering, we lay bare
the dead, the winter ground, the snow
which makes the forsythia first
the first blossom

and in the two weeks of spring:
damn the green growth gone
to green bloom, the resurrection
is sparse Desire
is sparse The confusion

of physical enjoyment
and desire Desire

is resurrection

The soul
is an onslaught

[Spring, 1956]

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GEORGE OPPEN

THE CIRCUMSTANCES
A Selection From George Oppen's Uncollected Writing

Edited by Rachel Blau DuPlessis

The Archive for New Poetry of The University of California at San Diego is a very rich and fascinating collection of papers of a number of significant contemporary figures—David Ignatow, Jerome Rothenberg, Clayton Eshleman, John Taggart, Ron Silliman, Paul Blackburn, among others. The Mandeville Department of Special Collections (in which the Archive of New Poetry is housed) owns the papers of two "Objectivist" writers—Charles Reznikoff and George Oppen. The Oppen collection occurs in three separate series: the literary papers of June Oppen Degnan who was an editor of *The San Francisco Review* and a co-publisher with James Laughlin of several volumes; in her collection are numerous letters from George Oppen some including poems. There are the family papers of Linda Oppen Mourelatos—mainly letters, including those from her father and mother, George and Mary Oppen. Oppen sent poems in draft to his daughter. And finally The George Oppen Archive, comprising letters to and carbons of letters from Oppen, drafts of poems and some unpublished poetry, and a major collection of working papers, some bound into "daybooks" and some loose sheets now assembled in folders by the cataloguers. The great bulk of this material is undated. It has been catalogued by David McMillan and Bradley Westbrook.

Oppen worked closely with Zukofsky, Reznikoff, and had bonds to Pound and Williams in the late 1920s to mid-1930s (1928–1934/5). He then stopped writing for 25 years for a variety of overlapping reasons: membership in the Communist Party (and unwillingness to write agitprop); service in World War II (in which he suffered serious injuries): life in political exile in Mexico. When his literary career began again, dramatically, in 1958, and for twenty years thereafter, Oppen remained chary to the point of abstemiousness with any kind of public critical comment, prose analyses, justificatory remarks, essays in poetics and other commentary that generally functions to guide or encourage critical reception of a poet's work. The only exception to his disinterest in public pronouncement are one essay, one book review, a scant handful of

working notes or letters to a few journals. He and Mary Oppen did, however, give several important interviews.

This self-chosen situation makes all the more exciting the realization of the past years, since the availability of the Oppen papers at UCSD, that Oppen's writing career did in fact include a large quantity of meditative prose in various genres, ranging from aphorisms, and statements to himself which might be called working papers, to writing modulating into drafts of poems, and letters to others. Much of this writing is of a high quality—provocative, elegant, tough-minded, witty—and much sheds a good deal of light on his poems, his poetic practices, and the intersection of political thinking and poetic production. One of the reasons I chose to edit *The Selected Letters of George Oppen* (Duke University Press, 1990) was to propose the importance of meditation, and essays-in-dialogue to Oppen's poetry and to his literary career.

In this and the next issue of *Sulfur,* I will be presenting unpublished materials from the complete 25-year range of Oppen's written work. I am doing so by the generosity of Linda Oppen Mourelatos, executor of the George Oppen Estate. This set of works, prepared for *Sulfur,* should not be regarded as constituting a definitive selection of the available materials (an image that did, however, control and assist my editing of the letters). Instead, this is an anthology of writing chosen for its intrinsic literary and cultural interest. I am dividing this presentation into several categories. In this issue, there will be uncollected poems. In addition, there are some uncompromising remarks in his working papers—first, those addressed "to young poets" (themselves a genre) about the writing of poetry, and second, on fellow poets. The people on whom he commented most are Pound, Zukofsky, Reznikoff, and Duncan. He also remarked often on Ginsberg, Rakosi, Williams, and Eliot. For this anthology of unpublished poetry and comments by Oppen, I have claimed a discarded Oppen title—*The Circumstances*—which, at one point, he was apparently considering for the collection *Primitive.* My reference texts are, of course, *The Collected Poems of George Oppen* (New Directions, 1975), abbreviated CP, and *Primitive* (Black Sparrow, 1978).

The Circumstances

The poems I have selected were 1) those excluded for one reason or another from final manuscripts, or 2) significant variations on or intersections with published poems. About the first category there is not too much to say; a person attentive to the Archive will find more of these works (not all of them filed with the poems—some are in letters), but in general there is not a bulk of unpublished but finished poems. There are

some ironic or observant epigrammatic poems, situational and contextual. Of these, I have selected one about Williams and the one called "Memorial." The second category is, to my mind, quite interesting, raising, as it does, questions of what constitutes the "finished." For there are, especially (but not exclusively) in the period of "Some San Francisco Poems" (c. 1969 for concentration on this writing) to the end of his poem-writing career (essentially 1978), a number of fluid uses of lines and of materials in drafts that have a highly convincing quality as—if not "final," then still distinctive provisional works. A least part of Oppen's practice seems to have involved the creation and then migration of lines or poem units (stanzas) from possible resting place to possible resting place, before they settled into or were closed in a poem. Some of the provisional resting places or combinations which Oppen developed seem highly plausible to an Oppen reader, despite finally being deemed, by the author, not yet finished.

I never could answer a difficult question adequately at a dinner party. Still, I do want to answer. I'll try, in the comparative peace of my electric typewriter:

If a man—or a woman, of course; you'll forgive the generic 'man'—goes rowing in the park, tho he may row as well as anyone who ever lived, tho he may row so well that he seems to be ice-skating, waltzing round and round the lake to the strains of the Blue Danube—still, he cannot row around and around that lake forever. But suppose he sets sail across a sea which, so far as he knows, has never been crossed—I am thinking of Columbus, of course, but of a columbus alone in a small boat. He too may turn back after a while, but if he does it can be only a failure of nerve. He will be tempted to turn back, but he will also be tempted not to. And he will not be tempted to continue only by the hope of approval. He will *want* to keep going, if only his nerve does not fail, even tho he has only his bare and anxious self in the boat.

Like the poet, if he becomes distracted by the desire to display his virtue, his grace, his anything at all—he will not get there. Because what he has to do is slug it out. A voyage in the open sea—unlike a row in the park—is no joke. It is also not vir-

tuous. Nor can he recommend it to the world at large. If he makes the trip, that's his own affair, and in his heart he knows it.

That Which Was—I thought—to be Demonstarted.
If only by metaphor.

(this to the woman who asked whether it is possible to continue writing poetry if no one reads it—i.e., no one prints it. And I will not send it because it doesn't really answer her question. She means: terrible things have happened to her, terrible things have been done, she is unhappy. She wants to tell someone and no one will listen unless somehow—it seems—she learns to write 'good' poetry—all sorts of tricks and styles and techniques—or no one will listen. So she has gone desperately to Creative writing classes. . .

Lorine Niedecker—being printed—wrote: It took a long/ time/ to weep/ a deep/ trickle

[1964–66] UCSD 16, 15, 1. This clearly began as a letter, but was not sent

I am afraid to tell anyone how little whole warehouses full of contemporary poetry actually matters to me At all!—even poetry which someone sends me, and which I can easily praise—and do—

someone drives a nail. I look at it consciously: ["]Yes, I say, there it is, in the wood. Hasn't bent at all, there are no hammer marks left on the wood itself" Perfect—I would say, Perfect. Congratulations—

I might perhaps add—tentatively—:perhaps, now, or have you thought of putting one piece of wood under another, so that the nail might go thru BOTH pieces of wood, and in that way it would, one might say, hold them together—?

"your eloquent and stimulating letter," they say.

The overblown language of childish
day-dreaming

(or of the 'teacher' : who [poses?] for a portrait of the children's day-dreams of themselves)

> overblown language (overblown in any way) (and no matter how tastefully)) or 'freshly' even seems to me always a childish day-dream

UCSD 16, 18, 4 some autograph, section boxed

The answer to the question "how can I know if my poem is good or not" is Your poem is bad. How can it not be? He had to decide on each syllable and each letter without knowing what was good and what was bad.

Hopeless. What are the possible combinations of the letters of the alphabet?

One revises a line, one alters a word, then one revises the punctuation, and then alters the line division—after altering the line, one restores the original punctuation. . .In all that, who tells you what is right? Who is there?? Who taught Reznikoff, or Bronk, or Naomi [Replansky]?? who was there??

And, if you have not yet brought to perfection what you want to do—It can only seem misguided. The story of Pound as a young man showing a poem in quantitative verse to Marsh. Marsh handed it back saying: it doesn't scan in iambics. The criticism was perfectly correct. Do you want such services from someone?

Of all arts, poetry has the simplest technical means—a pencil. One needs no technique at all except to know what word, what punctuation mark what white space must come next. That's absolutely all, and who can tell you?

that is to say: go home

I speak symbolically. Which means not quite, but almost, literally

UCSD 16, 15, 3

you read like a child as if you didn't want to be among these poets— but to look up to them

> one who thinks he is not a poet tries to write 'like poets'
> One who thinks he *is* a poet tries not to

to come down is the way in Parse the word, drive the word into its elements. We feel we can make a book out of what we know We cannot If we stick to the thing, keep our mind and our emotion on the thing and not the word, we—and the reader—learn a great deal as we write. No one knows enough to write a book before he writes a book

Each word must have some reason for existing in *itself* Something like the 'image'—the moment when you thought these things, knew these things, that moment in its actualness

otherwise, you see: dreariness

Shaped, shaped, the poem must be shaped, yes, even its form on the paper, for this vividness, this actualness which is the contrary of dreariness

the quality of life

objectivism: it means to experience the shape of the poem

yes, I would suppose so Mary can love men very much and very sweetly.
Mary can love men because of what she said: 'remember, we both love ourselves *most*

a poem is a machine made of words to carry the poet to where he is going

UCSD 16, 16, 7, some autograph, sections boxed

What I know and really all I know Is that you're on your own
You must begin, word by word, from scratch

One gets down a line the image The image is not a decoration

The image is what one believes to be true if one believes anything to be true—

One get down a line

One wants the words to lie on bedrock

Having a line a place to stand it is possible to take another step—

a method of thought: a proof of conviction, at least, if not truth.

to find one's question —*the question*
But one needs also a great deal of
Stubborness

[((in mind, the greatest enemy is one's own generation. Tho one must begin there]

UCSD 16, 15, 3. Mix of autograph and typing. Sections boxed. Some relation to his essay "The Mind's Own Place."

Miracle on the small page—and fear Tall buildings, hills, stars, universes, distances, ALL OF IT INCREDIBLE and all of us alone.

None of us alone I say to myself 'Cities full of people, and I am afraid Words frighten me, and forgetting, and remembering It is necessary to be afraid of the poem, and of words, each word It is necessary to be afraid and not to be afraid, and to not be afraid of small things

(letter to Alex Lattimore:

happy to find myself of use to you—out there where you are

tall buildings, hills, stars, universes, distances, all of it incredible and neither of us alone. I mean to say, thank you for your letter

(beyond the 'literary[']—to things To people, and ourselves

---

the inlet, the long body of water a tongue stretching landward in the windless morning, the sun rising in the entrance, and the miniature houses along the shores

it is necessary to be afraid of words, it is necessary to be afraid of each word, every word

miracle on the small page

the essential clarity—is the poem

UCSD 16, 15, 8, some autograph, sections boxed.

[On Charles Reznikoff]

It cannot be said that Rezi was as "important" as Williams, Pound, Eliot, because actually he was not important in the development of modern poetry. Simply almost none of the poets had read him. He could have been of great importance, it is even true that it would have been a very good thing if he had played an important role: he would have presented at least an alternative to the influence of Williams, the aridities derived from Eliot— We might have avoided a great many difficulties; Williams' model has rather made fakery easy, Pound and the obfuscations of Ezra Pound invite even easier imitation, and tho Auden and the Eliot school are perhaps not altogether easy to imitate, it is at least true that the manner apparently can be acquired with a certain amount of education even by those who possess no poetic intuition at all.

—but it is probably that nothing of importance in Rezi can be imitated. And it is likely that which explains the neglect of his work[.]

[1961–63], UCSD 16, 19, 1

Rezi's death : the end of an era for me. I don't think there will be such a poetry again. I think the image will never again carry such pure meaning.

UCSD 16, 16, 7.
Reznikoff died January 1976.

[On Carl Rakosi]

Rakosi like the resident of an igloo creating his own Northern Lights

UCSD 16, 18, 1

[On Louis Zukofsky]

Zuk's A/ the motor is running in neutral

UCSD 16, 18, 1

Louis Z and the CP 'They wanted me to distribute Leaflets!'

Simply, he was never willing to do anything for anyone. He was quite willing that the communists should regard him as a great poet. He offered. That was the extent of his willingness

UCSD 16, 18, 2

Louis' Catullus

if we had as little knowledge of French, we might 'translate' *Où sont les neiges d'antan* as who sent less eggs, Anton?

An obscure style can save the writer a great deal of time, and make him almost invulnerable to attack. excellent tactic! it permits him, moreover, to include learned references to matters which are no part of his life [in the obscurity the distinction between what he has experienced and what he has not become invisible]

[bracketed statement is crossed out in text]

and yet and yet when Louis writes of what he has known in his life, it is poetry, and poetry of very great beauty—astonishing beauty—and when he does not, it does not,

UCSD 16, 18, 3

It is difficult for me to write of Zukofsky for he stopped speaking to me or corresponding with me many years ago, and if I speak of him now I must either record this fact (which becomes mere gossip) or claim an intimacy that I have not had for many years.

UCSD 16, 14, 12; dated June 1978

the the and an a are equal (is Louis saying this?)
the part is equal to the whole
    the meaning of a place is the meaning of all places

UCSD 16, 16, 6

Louis, who has 'done away with epistemology,' He did so not [autograph in Xerox unreadable; GO crossed off the phrase "explained as"] 'If you want to say yes, say yes If you want to say no, say no'

But there seems to be some epistemology in the word yes and the word no Perhaps one had better say, 'If you want to say ouch, say ouch' The remark *can* be free of epistemology

---

The words *yes* and *no* are not free of epistemology. The word *ouch* is.

UCSD 16, 18, 2. Allusions to Zukofsky's interview with Dembo, in *Contemporary Literature,* and the Oppen poem "The Lighthouses," CP 250–51.

[On Marianne Moore]

Marianne Moore — Probably the simplest woman, certainly the primmest—who ever produced poetry. I can't take it seriously as an ethic, which is what she is concerned with

She sees, in many places, very detailed, neat work. And approves.

UCSD 16, 16, 2

[On Lorine Niedecker]

O June, O June, O sometimes imperceptive June——

Fear, fear, fear! So that you may accept 'But I have seen a peacock' because its braggadocio seems 'courageous,' but are afraid to hear Lorine.

Dispensing with the remote and stately language of 'Mute inglorious Miltons,' she says that as she approaches old age, her very small book is published and is read. In her rundown farm house, in its scraggly yard, it took a lifetime to weep—a visible trickle.

How much is done with the one word: trickle. It gives the farm yard, it gives the tiny life and the tiny person — in one word. An ordinary word, a folk-word.

It cannot be said more vividly, nor more briefly, with less working-up of oneself, which is onanism. The voice of a man or a woman who perhaps never masturbates, who has not learned to — frightens people.

But it is poetry. Nothing else is.

UCSD 16, 15, 3. Addressed to
June Oppen Degnan, possibly 1962–63.

[On Ezra Pound]

The Cantos: no need — say I am aware of the beauties of the poem

But as a philosophical poem, as a poetry of statement it is a failure: it does not at any time reach ground from which it could achieve anything but failure

UCSD 16, 16, 6

Pound, the encyclopedic, didn't speak of the gas chambers. Why not? Possible to imagine that he approved them. But why did he not speak of them??

Suppose he HAD put them in the poems — described them, imagined them — here would be the uses of poetry as a means of thought — He would have learned again to think, that is, to permit the brain, the psyche, the soul to function beyond the nonsense of Major Douglas, and the noise of Bertrans

TEST it by poetry, Ezra: write about the gas chambers, write of the children in the gas chambers

UCSD 16, 16, 10

Where were the poets? Pound! well, Pound.
But Eliot? Stevens? even Williams? and the men of my generation:
The academics!
That when Lidice was destroyed and Oradour,
That when the bomb fell on Hiroshima
And when the villages of Korea were burned

Wave following wave of planes dropping napalm,
Wave after wave to render retreat useless—

Few spoke at all. And those who did
Many were jailed, and more were destroyed.
All that in the calm of Truman
And ended finally in the simplicities of Eisenhower
Without apologies to the jailed, the black-listed, the exiled—

UCSD 16, 27, 79; typewriter of c. 1964–66.

The pigeons fly from the dark bough
unleaved to the window ledge;
There is no face.

"The Pigeons," 1928–35.
UCSD 16, 28, 78. Cut from *Discrete Series*.

THE TOWN

There can be a brick in a brick wall
The eye picks

So empty on a Sunday.
The silent signs.

Quiet Sunday
On the flatof the table
The match box, there asmuch as anything.

Handling baggage in leather gloves,
A few years out of high school,
A young man furious. The new wine.

"The Town"
UCSD 16, 29, 51. Dated January 1959.
Part will re-emerge in "A Language of New York," and then in "Of Being Numerous."

MAN'S LIFE

No stranger nor a stranger's son
Old as they come, really,
No one ahead to fall from space, from light
Which is the only space or light
(Remember
"Me"?)

Sparrow on the cobbled street,
Little sparrow round and sweet,
Chaucer's bird. But we:
"Our times—our fathers' times"

or if a leaf
Sparkle in some forest—
O we love leaves, but we speak
To each other,
"Our times".

Daughter, our daughter, no child but our child.
Stone universe, but we are not.

"Man's Life"
UCSD 17, 4, 14. 1958–59.

GENERATION OF DRIVERS

America, America,
Brand new America,
Old codgers' home.

'Fix anything', a village sign.
He tells them 'Treat 'er easy now.

Needs tires—'

Past it, thru it,
Down the highways, past the trailer camps
(They see them? See the trailer camps?)
Half private down the eight lane roads,
The young
To find it—find their own.
But who the fathers? How the sons?

And who loves who?

An entity
Of two, which they love?

"Generation of Drivers"
UCSD 33, 3, 5. 1958–59.

TRUCK STOP

The diner where
Because the waitress is a woman
There is a sort of agony
In jokes that all are wry about
How much there is to give, and how
Miserable the apple pie

Brought in woman's hands and arms
Actually is.

"Truck Stop"
UCSD 33, 3, 5.

A DEBT

Ourselves we sing!
But let us write for conscience' sake and in some pride of other men.

Not passengers, the crew.
A planet
Isn't habitable but by labor,
For we are alone and live by labor.

Freedom of the crew—define it?

Or machine shop. Noise in which one lives, sees—
For money doesn't grow on trees, nor simple brackets
Grow so easy. Shock
Of the press: one second there,
The manufactured part.

New made. To tolerance. Less perfect than the die
Which is imperfect.
Checked
By some mechanic—for who will do it? and we live by labor
Ninety-nine percent
Of sheer necessity, so little said of it.

"A Debt"
UCSD 17, 4, 14. Precedes version published in *The San Francisco Review* I, 7 (Dec. 1960), p. 73; both versions differ from CP 39.

THE WILSHIRE ARMS

Rectangular among the crowds, rearing
Black windows into daylight—The sound

Of a piano in the deep bulk tying
Generations to a Sunday that holds,
As the building holds, only the adamant;

Nothing that the child hopes,
Laboring a tune. As from the dark
Satir wells; 'If even in this wilderness
I am!. . .' The day

Flawless and without exterior,
Without alternative. But to the tenant
The future is all chance, all future, and the present
All inanimate, or all themselves.

"The Wilshire Arms"
UCSD 33, 3, 5. Not on findings list.

THE MEN

They seemed in love with the words
Of artisans; things end for end,
Butted to each other, dove tailed,
Bolts wrung, bolts frozen—. That world lacked
Only an exterior. But that it lacked, spinning
If it does on that fabulous axis
Beyond will and tilted to the famous summers
Of those useful men,
Those rule-of-thumb mechanics.

"The Men"
UCSD 17, 4, 14.

THE AMALGAMATED

Incredibly worn, the cafeteria of the fur workers and the garment workers. They know each other, therefore they know everything here, they have lived this life for a very long time

It is an entirely terrible life

They are tired and possessed of endless energy; one must call it courage

The hungry mosquito is courageous, you would let him eat of you if only he would stay out of your ears

Or away from your head; you would let him eat, or you come to think so

The mosquito thinks he knows how to eat

Shall you love him for that? What is it that you want of people, what is it that you want?

"The Amalgamated" [1963?]
UCSD 16, 27, 11. Version "A"—slight differences in final line with other versions.

NATION

The whole city
Blazing light at evening—

One could picture him, the workman.
But the speedway's traffic;
Curved, enameled, glassed—
Even the factory is simple
Where they build these things
But the young woman in the car ahead

Is strange as an Etruscan vase—
And middle aged.
It grows confused.
The ten ton semi
Down the edge of pavement
Seems like some intrusion.

Grows confused.
The suburbs are a simple job. Foundations dug,
They could be dug with any shovel, worn out spade;
All that is simple. There is nothing in a house
That isn't simple; water glass, the roof, a house nailed
tight
And in the window
Sun comes thru our things!

Burning
On the real horizon.
The million million windows of the city
And the grimed sills
Children, beds of the defeated,
The million weary wakings—
These people poured
Into the enormous motion
As the day breaks on suburban shore

"Nation"
UCSD 33, 3, 5. Some lines go into
"Philai Te Kou Philai," *This in Which* (1965).

MEMORY OF OARS

There are no nouns of verse, the earth itself
No longer home. A rocket into space—

And where the heart is,
Home. Water of the sea;

The leaping sea, or ground beneath the sea, beneath the
forest
Curving with the planet—Thrust
Thru the seas by the power of the oarsmen
They lowered the grapple over the bow again, shouting,
And caught a bottle out of the sea where it lapped up
and over in the bow wave
Glassy as the sea, for the message, addressed as always
To the shore or the ship, whole with the power of the
oarsmen.

"Memory of Oars"
UCSD 33, 3, 5, also 16, 28, 37.

CARPENTER'S BOAT

The old things.
The new wood as old as carpentry

In the shadow of the boat's side
The sea becomes water

Rounding the far buoy, wild
Steel rolling in the sea,
The boat moves more lightly with the wind.
I remember the thin wood, the light planks

Nothing in the air
Made of air!

Beach the boat, carpenter,
Carpenter and other things,
The sea is all outdoors.

Passed hill and farm house—home to the eye—
Or the brass plate in the apartment house lobby.

"Carpenter's Boat"
UCSD 33, 3, 5; compare the poem
of the same title in CP 110.

CULTURAL TRIUMPH

If 'Miss Moore's (birds) squeal, shuffle, lose their footing
In the tree, in the mind, in the poem' as the critic
Reproduces them, is not
Something proven?—the bird
With its hard
Claws
Clinging to the rough
Tree, the small minds
In the trees,
The mind and the poem
Proven? Or is that not

What was in question? How terrible the mind
Is, open
To the world. The single mind
Flinches, panics, would, from its distance,
Its too large body and its irremediable
Vision
Crowd itself into the bird-life, but we observe
The bird from safety,
From the common culture.

"Cultural Triumph"
UCSD 17, 4, 17. The citation on Moore
is by Hugh Kenner, in *Poetry;* Oppen noted
this information on a copy in 16, 27, 39.

BRONX ZOO

The men have worked all week. If they have talked
Of what they would like to do of a Sunday
It was not of taking children
To see the animals. They are embarrassed
And ashamed, they suspect they have fathered strangers
On the bodies of strange women. They stare into space
As if into another world
Tho they see none. This world,
This strangely abstract world
Of clothes
And cars, propriety
And impropriety will alter
Or will die.

"Bronx Zoo"
UCSD 17, 4, 17. Explicitly excluded from *This in Which;* see letter to June Oppen Degnan 17, 4, 17.

FLIGHT 162

Leaving from Idlewild,
Whose agents
May have warned them
Of Icarus, and feathers,
And winged horses—

Plain sons and daughters
Of plain fathers
Who have allowed the currents
Of events to form them
Sit side by side
In flight. My seat-mate
Reading the New Yorker
In mid-air as if to concentrate
Against my shoulder

The proof of their success, where others
With their wax and feathers
Failed.

"Flight 162"
UCSD 17, 4, 17. Also titled "Flight 128,"
in 16, 27, 66. Not the same as
"Flight," CP, 128.

MEMORIAL

In the Trocadero
The leaflet folded
Down the center
As they lost their lives with it

Carried in a pocket
Or under an overcoat:

Anatole Levitsky, Chargé de Musée de l'Homme
Boris Vilde
Deborah Lipshitz.

"Memorial"
UCSD 17, 4, 17. Not on findings list.

MEMORY AT 'THE MODERN'

We had seen bare land
And the people bare on it
And men camp
In the city. The lights,
Pavement, this important device
Of a race, I wrote then,
Twenty three years old,
Remains till morning. Nobody knows who died

On the roads of the time, of the fact of the roads.
I am a man of the 'Thirties

'No other taste shall change this'

"Memory at 'The Modern'"
UCSD 17, 4, 17. Published in *Elizabeth* IV (October 1963). Explicitly excluded from *This in Which*, see 17, 4, 17, letter to JOD.

Wheelers and Dealers:
The Theory of Games
The world is becoming invisible. Rainer Maria Rilke

We might have foreseen it,
The triumph of calculation;
The atom calculated
By its chances.
What can I know? What shall I do?
What may I hope?
And what are my chances?

We ought to be able to survive it.
Out of the unknown activities
Of unknown agents
Mathematical numbers emerge. The last
Invisible world
Of the buyers, the sellers, the planners—

"Wheelers and Dealers. . ."
UCSD 17, 4, 17.

Bill before his death,
Bill very old,
Still like a boy, but a boy
Whom an axe has hit

Again and again in the dark
In the last months, an arm
Stiff, a leg
Dragging, his speech
Impeded—'You cannot
Imagine,' he said
'What has
Been happening
To me—'

"Bill. . ."
UCSD 16, 27, 22. TS. with autograph
corrections; not clearly finished.
William Carlos Williams died March 4, 1963.

THE PHONEMES

The poems have too much point
As tho I need invent
The thing is in my mind always, available,
Juggler, why need I invent so much
Tho I think only of the coasts, figures of men and animals
On the silent coasts

"The Phonemes"
UCSD 16, 28, 77. Typewriter of 1964–66.

ANY WAY BUT BACK

I have a superstition of destiny. Those poets who have lacked that superstition have died young

A superstition concerning families

Which is to say the future
Issuing from a dining room

And the old fashioned bulk
Of a family home.

Well, a madman.

Scenes
Still lucid

A child carried by the trains of nineteen-eighteen
From New York to California

Three thousand miles
Of rails

A *journey,* day's act
Redeemed 'outside all systems

Of redemption'
Its meaning formed in the veins

Of sympathy across the fields
To the gullies and the fences in the fields

And along the public aisles
In the train to the hushed doors

Of the diner
And the waiters

The men in the club car

Wild noise and grit
On the observation porch

And I did not know, when I was a child, whom to write to—
Handymen, servants, the primitive dead—

The book is my own. And, in a way, a deliberate surrender—
Those poems, the superstitious poems

To write the words down

"Any Way But Back"
UCSD 16, 27, 16. Was once, it appears, intended for *The Collected Poems* [?], written "deliberately but 'tentatively' to close the new book." Impulse goes into part of "The Book of Job. . .," cf. CP 241.

THE POWERS

I would go home o go home to the rough

stone become

the turn the cadence the verse and the music
the essential

clarity, plain glass, strangest of all places

strange as all places strange as chance

strange as luck
and its guilts strange

strange and the slang word speaks
in the whirl-winds Semite

to find a way

for myself now

old strange to happen
to a child strange

to become old the innocence

of the insulted in the challenged
blood of childhood now patriarchal

Jew most strange

to myself not Roman

nor barbarian had I foreseen
this the words

themselves
or their strangeness strange

the saving ray
of strangeness saving

ray of exile ray

of darkness ray of light

"The Powers"
UCSD 16, 24, 2. Some of this poem, under the title "To Find a Way," appeared in *Ironwood* 5 (1975). A number of late Oppen poems combine here including "The Lighthouses." Not on findings list.

ALL THIS STRANGENESS

it is a sea but is it music
binds

the spell

or thought it is a sea

no place but the place
of desire the little boat runs up

against the long flank of the wave *shadow*

brought into light a place

like all others desire
desire at the heart of the living

world the poem

spells itself out *(why then*
all this strangeness) to say

all you know all
you are all
that has happened the world's

birth stirs like a breeze
in the streets and the lights
of the fast car

overtaking us
on the highway were the lights
of other lives dazzling silver

fire in the rear-view mirror whitening

the grass if you look
deep

in the forest a girl's

poem said you may see
the poem
spells itself out

"All This Strangeness"
UCSD 16, 24, 2. With autograph note on text
by Oppen: "Not in Collected."
Not on findings list.

A DREAM OF POLITICS

in art
in art

the image

need not declare itself the work of god yet I knew I
would remember

children

running on the beach with their beating
hearts in the turn
of the seasons small

pride small

terror in the soft dusk centuries

behind these words here with the tongue and groove
wood of the back porch in the minor riot

of the grasses starlight
among us the night

becoming dawn

stitch upon stitch
sewn without thread bright

in the back yard tongueless

as the neighborhood sleeping

sisters sleeping
brothers dizzy

wordings o my elderly
siblings the children running

on the beach in the hissing
surf I don't know

don't know
what to say

"A Dream of Politics"
UCSD 16, 24, 16, Version "C". With autograph note on text by Oppen: "Write Glassgold to omit this" [Peter Glassgold of New Directions] and another autograph note "(perhaps isn't in ND ms)."

THE DREAM

I dreamed one night that I was in Northern France in one of the red-brick industrial towns the doors and the windows locked. I knocked on a door and entered and I said to the family *I was here during the war, I was in a house near here tho I cannot find it, it is near, you can take me there they will know me.* I stood

in that room and they would not guide me. I was lost and they could not guide me

"The Dream"
UCSD 16, 27, 55. A prose poem with articulated line breaks; explicitly excluded from *Primitive*.

carved
of that air once once only in the deluge

of minutes a tree

a city
a stone in the road waiting

stones eagles seagulls sliding
sideways down the wind I cannot find

a way to speak

of this the source
the image the space

of the poem our

space too great
or too small 'for we are here
and must mean it' where the world rides
the words

speak of too little
time remaining fearful

of sorrow in this once once only
among atoms, eagles, and alone

"carved / of that air. . ."
UCSD 16, 26, 16. In one of the versions of *Primitive,* this poem closed the mss. By January 1977 (16, 26, 17), the poem was cut. An alternative version of this poem appeared in *APR* 5, 5, (1976) called "Fear"; an alternative version of some of it appeared in *Grosseteste Review* 10 (1977).

H-YRDN

(i) *the letters of the lovers are entwined in a "garden"*

no me
who has no name

right itself

as in
"the omission of one letter

all things turn

to the eye of the goat
our father

And to the eye our mother

All things/ turn in the eye

as by a strange hand
"taken down

Notice then the further inversion. *Who are you/ you who have entered* /The asphalt radiant// Had been "garden" or a "desert"/ moved// Azrael contained that letter
in the rib of his mouth.

who but you)

captive by the face of the fire

ash came// *ash-sham*
a kingdom

verted in the midst

the woundedness

buoyant in (a world
the dream in Rabbah:

walls grew up like flames.

(ii) from the mouth of the servant boy

"canceled

a fabrication or fabric

(She was in love

with the mother with Thetis

Tiomat/ the coast engulfed her

or "ate its young"

Nothing (whatever was forbidden
the forbidden god

was ruin, ***mafi***

dolphin or the mourning scarf she

took from the brink

(iii)

At Amra: Andromeda with spread arms

(to the east of ***river***
second circle is Cygnus
(escarpment
and the Dolphin

first-known claiming heaven

"there as here" the color blasted
into Christ

*

A new voice holden

"as in the former years
the Straight road
whilst we walk: sweet spring
black iris

to drink of the river: Sihor or Sidon

*

too strong for the vessel
that *Allat* and a jealous stone/

without walls
was "outside" or in unity

of a flower we/ lap or give her

*

Polydictes: confounding the tongues

Polydectes, who 'receives many'
the outer covering of the flower

*

pearls the fortune of
the law a beacon, thinking back

is the desert
where the iris spoke

*

"here the cold is beginning

The picture was not the many receiving
pearls from the wise but bringing them.
"Sea creatures with human heads"
brought them to shore in their mouths

*

"But we all, with open face
beholding as in a glass

his "Read"/ "I cannot read."
crossing "speak" or "write" /in that place

who touched my mouth broke the band

"roses or a rose city

damascq: ash-sham
a linen hand tampered with

where one was (a skirt
traces the escarpment

from Taurus
to the Pleiades/ a hem

of possession and retrieval

below earth and below
the sea

If the river were in flames
a dove also
was a form of commerce
and a lion existed like two
cypress tress beyond which the City
lit

In walls
    (a city without border/
from the edge of that rose
    three worlds fell away

a fraction of stone
in the eye of God.

first half of the sentence is lost

Qeys / Queyes
mother or a city of the lover

Between the north and the southern Karnak

"The sea encompasses me, encompasses my Book."

of "increase" as of "deliverance"

It was their blessing that they were lost

and so retained each other:
Qeys and Lubna at the tomb

In Enoch's city / a bead game

of *memory* of Mary / of the rose.

—she conceived like a mare, by the wind—

At the opening of the Mouth// all the apertures

filled her, Mara
who remains "empty"/ Maia the midwife

bearing/ to revel and reveal.

sometimes it is named "tree" and sometimes "sun"

It was about pearls, the picture of the fish.

Arthemis/ *samakah* deep in this river

or a hillside against white wings (Diana)
searching the mouth

healing the *abtar,* sonless one
mutilated and adorned

"to be removed

from the Taurus down/ strikes the rose
into Karnak of Thebes.

KAREN KELLEY

from ANONYMOUS WOMAN

ANONYMOUS WOMAN VII

In a mall I see a store selling beautiful purses, a freestanding glass booth full of purses embossed with brilliant cascades of lilies of the valley, violets and pinks or carnations. I need a purse, but they cost fifty dollars and I don't have enough money to be extravagant. Hear a woman yelling. She is dragging a goat off of her daughter. The daughter is retarded and stands by while her mother tells the manager she's convinced the animal is mistreated and underfed, that she's brought her daughter to many animal farms and never has an animal tried to eat the clothes off her child. The goat jumps on the child again, and it becomes apparent the animal is humping her, that it is a sexual attack. Someone in the crowd says that children's bodies produce tremendous amounts of calcium in June, particularly retarded children, and perhaps that is why the goat is attacking her, to get at the calcium.

ANONYMOUS WOMAN VIII

finally a woman will come along and men will see the action of the woman feeding giving in unravelling from the bias strands unhooking colors undone waterfalling waterfalling until dry red dried blood brood brooding musing music muscle unhooking the way parasites bore in not much worse than flu though if severe can kill you blood-red pillow of no comfort *for whose head?*

to guard oneself from being hit how the fellow swings swing out (swine) swing at but later broken-legged saying it happened while we were dancing who? me and the "bloke" meaning not knowing each other well no family-group never ate food together but yes to the nighttime ritual me a woman with my fires lit lap-legs a ring attractive rug repeat it as if we're in the grass an opening in the flowers not a dancing skirt but a woman's body rolled into a twine into red ochre into gibberish as if falling down falling silent

here come the white men pluck the fur off til there's no fur on the skin rub ashes until the stiffness is gone twist the fur separated one big and strong the other twisted until it is called something no one understands human hair perhaps or the waist of a man or piece of twine or white paint or mother or pearly kernels of teeth like small dots red ochre dots on the waist of the dancer I was to become

DONALD KUSPIT

CUSI MASUDA AT 75 HUDSON STREET

Leaving the street, with its interminable traffic, stooping to avoid hitting my head on the low door, I entered an unfamiliar world. This is said about art often enough, but in this case it was undeniable, for the world I had entered was not immediately recognizable even as art. In a large white space a naked performer vigorously and persistently hacked away with an axe at a huge white globe.

What *was* immediately apparent was that this "eternal performance," as the "artist" describes the event, was quite different from the tame events that pass for performances these days. The performance space was crowded with five white globes, made of plaster, with entry slots. When I arrived, one had already been demolished, another was in the process of being demolished, and three remained to be demolished. There were also 11 body molds—the artist calls them coffins—made of the same white plaster, some had also been attacked with the axe.

One wall of the space was covered with sheet metal painted with three nightmarish, expressionistic images: a tearful bleeding eye, a pustulating wound and a skeletal pelvis. This wall, and its morbid images, had also been devastated by the axe. Raw yet carefully aimed aggression seemed at work here—violence driven yet under control.

This was confirmed by the artist—half his hair and mustache shaved away, half his body and face painted—who nimbly climbed a globe until he had found a spot to penetrate with his axe and then hacked away with an almost rhetorically ritualistic violence. The sense of the destructive replacement of order by chaos, encouraged by the plaster dust in the air and the rubble on the floor, was preternatural, and initially incomprehensible. Convenient associations—such as the samurai warrior, evoked by the

artist's Japanese origins—came to mind, but they were too facile, serving more as reassurance in the presence of this bizarre event than as clarification of its import.

The violence was far from entertaining—despite the showmanship of some gestures—because it was too intense, unrelieved. There was not even much relief when the artist, having worked himself to the limits of his strength, rested in one of his coffins, dead to the world. His eventual resurrection was inevitable. The images of death on the wall, and the artist's own death in his coffin, were clearly meant to be repeated.

The performer's indifference to the audience seemed to feed rather than mitigate his aggression. He was totally absorbed in some private hell of his own, some Sisyphean enterprise which we witnessed but never shared. Why did Sisyphus never think of destroying the burdensome wheel he trundled? We could do nothing to alleviate his lot, for he was acting out some private fantasy.

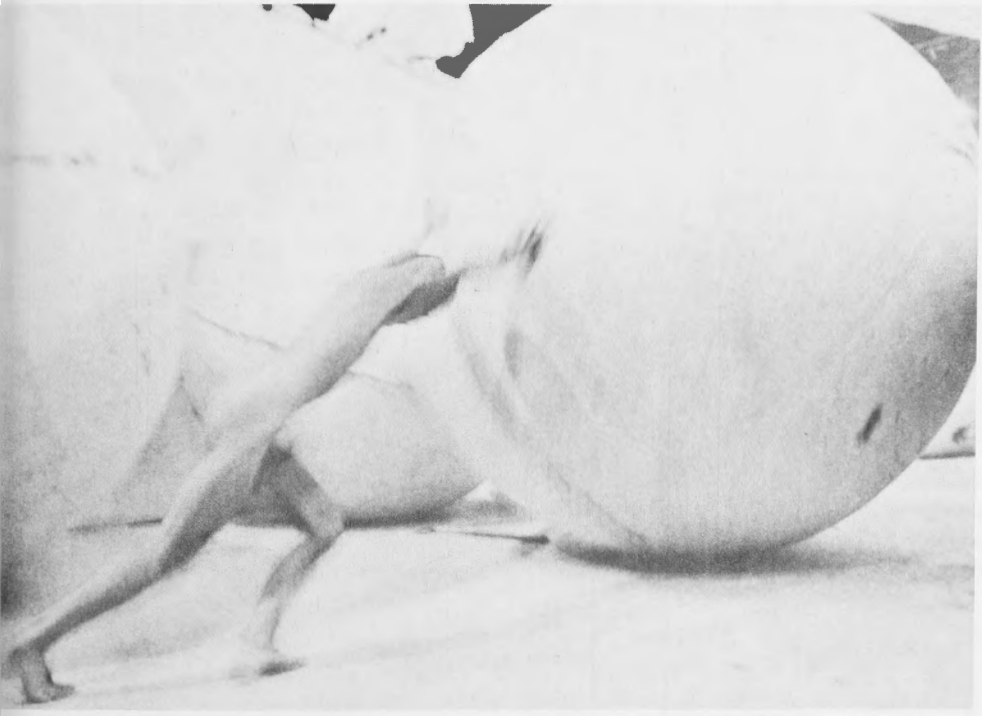
But in the very act of strengthening his presence by repetition, he was also intensifying the private hell he meant to purge. This was art only in the sense that some private terror—perhaps inspired by devastating public events (the artist spoke of World War II destruction in Japan, when he was a child)—was given a ritualistic form. But the desperation was not contained by the form. The artist's ritual may have overcome terror, but the ritual was so much a part of the terror that it emerged all the more starkly.

This performance lasted three weeks—two hours on weekdays and four hours on one day of the weekend. I visited it intermittently. On one occasion I left after the artist had been hanging upside down in one of his coffins for what seemed like an impossible length of time. It seemed like pure self-torture until I recalled an account of shamanism among American Indians. In one ceremony the shaman hangs upside down until he loses consciousness—the moment before he supposedly enters a visionary trance. One way of shaking off ordinary consciousness is to turn one's body upside down—what has sunk down in the unconscious will then rise to consciousness.

Masuda's art is as monotonous, visionary and absolute as any offered by Minimalism, which has a shamanistic dimension of its own. Indeed, Masuda offers what can only be described as Minimalist violence—the ritual form becomes a gestalt which gives decorum to, classicizes, a basic, exemplary violence.

CUSI MASUDA

from THE 75 HUDSON STREET PERFORMANCE, 1980



MYUNG MI KIM

TWO POEMS

UNDER FLAG

Is distance. If she knows it

Casting and again casting into the pond to hook the same turtle

Beset by borders conquered, disfigured

One house can be seen

Then another thatched roof

On this side of the sea the rancor of their arrival
Where invasion occurs according to schedule

Evacuees, a singular wave set against stubbled bluffs

Rigor of those who carry households on their backs

Above: victims.
Below: Chonui, a typical Korean town. In the distance,
a 155-mm shell has exploded.

Of elders who would have been sitting in the warmest part
of the house with comforters draped around their shoulders
peeling tangerines

Of an uncle with shrapnel burrowing into shinbone
for thirty years

A wave of much white cloth

Handful of millet, a pair of never worn shoes, one chicken
grabbed by the neck, ill-prepared, ill-prepared for carrying,
carrying through

Not to have seen it yet inheriting it

Drilled at the core for mineral yield and this, once depleted,
never to be replaced

At dawn the next morning, firing his machine gun, Corporal Leonard H. was shot and instantly killed while stopping the Red's last attempts to overrun and take the hilltop

The demoralized ROK troops disappeared but the handful of Americans, completely surrounded, held out for seven hours against continuous attack, until all ammunition was exhausted

General D's skillful direction of the fight was fully as memorable as his heroic personal participation with pistol and bazooka

Gruman F9F
Bell H-130S
Shooting Stars
Flying Cheetahs

They could handle them if they would only use the weapons we
have
given them properly, said Colonel Wright

Lockheed F-04 Starfire
Lockheed F-803
Bell H-13 Sioux
Bell H-13 Ds

More kept coming. More fell

Is distance. If she could know it

From a far from close

Citizens to the streets marching

Their demands lettered in blood

The leader counters them

With gas meant to thwart any crowd's ambition

And they must scatter, white cloths over their faces

Every month on the 15th, there is an air raid drill sometime during the day, lasting approximately 15 minutes. When the siren goes off, everyone must get off the streets. An all clear siren marks the end of the drill.

And how long practice how long drill to subvert what borders
are

What must we call each other if we meet there

Brother sister neighbor lover go unsaid what we are

Tens of thousands of names

Go unsaid the family name

Sun, an affliction hitting white

Retinue of figures dwindling to size

The eye won't be appeased

His name stitched on his school uniform, flame

Flame around what will fall as ash

Kerosene soaked skin housing what will burn

Fierce tenement of protest

Faces spread in a field

On the breeze what might be azaleas in full bloom

Composed of many lengths of bone

"I CANNOT HEAVE MY HEART INTO MY MOUTH"
(Cordelia, *King Lear)*

Widest angle of vision before vision fails to mean

Where circle returns predator and prey

Prefaced earth's face

Turns to broadcast scarce cover of dirt

Between this and next

Afterbirth of the first child

Planted with a sapling the now full swerving pine

And that same child scattering a last handful of dirt

For send-off, for delineation

No trace on earth of what is said

No way to put a palm up against it

The treble, the trouble, of woods, of words

Elements. Elemental. So speak. Air water fire rise fall

No way to speak it

Larynx thin string, strung

Unschooled pulley throat

A bird calls out in perfect thirds: do-mi, do mi

Domi, domi, saal zsin domi
Domi, domi, oh fat snapper

As complicated as it is

As dirt is scrubbed off that a thousand hands smear on

As dim railings pen children at long tables spooning gruel

As the infant face is absence onto which we say
Is is like— it is like—

As a compass locates relocates and cuts fresh figures

As silence to mate(d) world

Not founded by mother or father

Spun into coherence (cohere)

Cohere who can say

PAT PHILLIPS

THREE POEMS

CHILD

I am stolen,
a thousand germs and

ended,
queasy in the hands

of mothers,
trances in wandering names.

I am close,
by nature a circle

without work,
an alluvium of touch—

one upon one
upon one without middle

no momentum. I will lie
in the hollow

kissing men and women—
strands of hair,

taught, alert to
an involution of

paychecks—
a stem of marrow.

FEATURES

Though we spoke organs,
we huddled

at suddeness—dry things.
now chairs drag packages

down street, tables undress.
Now, a bed has heaped

on the table.
We could be crying,

other things
And, this and that

is skin, is coughing.
No longer is it

houses hurrying, broken
at the hip.

It is you and you,
stricken of before and

before—it is arms
struggled onto boxes.

At this we remembered
retreating, carrying

the tongue of blindness
rustling in pockets

empty, partial. At this
the lips surrounded

and hunkered down into
now—

forgotten as if black,
yet celebrated as ships.

ALLEY

Dark in, just dark—
probe through apple,

a whisper with red,
with dog,

with no thing. walk
a hundred, none more

see, C the dark
apple hammer out

the miles, stuck like
"I think I can, I. . ."

rhymes that tick like
ants on soft petals.

slow, cause we don't
stop, slow. in

a morse of pimples
talk

a face, a slurry
suspending a body.

and some thing flutters
like a lamp-post

placeless and happy
outside.

MICHEL DEGUY

A DRAFT OF SEVERAL REFLECTIONS
A Contribution To a Collective Work *"On the Subject of Shoah"*

(Tr. from the French by Sarah Barbour and Victoria Bridges)

So, last summer, along with thousands of others whom I now think of as friends, I saw Claude Lanzmann's film, "Shoah," first in segments, then in a single showing. On seeing this work, it is immediately apparent that it demands considerable care. Memoire, memorial, it was waiting with extreme patience, and still awaits our endurance, the endurance of thought; what Henry Corbin calls our love, when he says, "everything that the indifferent call the past comes forth only in direct proportion to our love, itself the source of the future. One must have the courage of one's love." It waited with the reticence of a work that we might not notice, kept in cinemas, at the edge of our streets, "on the TV," at the edge of our days, letting us get on with the business of our lives, but with the silent, enormous insistence of a face which might not catch our eye, but which *looks at us*. Francois Furet used to say, "Forty years after its defeat, Nazism still represents an enigma to historical reason"; and Lanzmann, "Shoah remains opaque and mysterious in many ways." The very term "Shoah" has become this name, opaque and mysterious, has *entered* our speech, our murmurings, our meditations, our allusions, like a somber guest in the house who can no longer be forgotten, whose first name we mumble; in French a term so close to the one we use to stifle a sound, just like the ghostly figure of Simon Srebnik *in the film,* silent and smiling at Chelmo among the Polish parishioners.

If I linger now on the threshold of my reflections, as if to excuse myself, almost in prayer, it's because there is something of a violent contradiction here—here even more so than there usually is—between the modesty required and the exhibitionism of speech making. Perhaps speeches shouldn't even be made about

Shoah. The temerity—not unfounded in this case—of speaking about the film in place of the author, renders me nearly speechless with an unappeasable anxiety.

What is usually called "images," that *causa materiali* of cinema and of the audiovisual in general, quenches the ardent thirst to see, to recognize the infinite range of the perceptible; "More! More!" Like a feverish invalid who is drip-fed on his pillows, our febrile, puerile, Sisyphean *libido vivendi*, our "morbid curiosity," as the moralists call it, the mouth of the eye, trembling with every image, here it is, leaning back in its front-row seat, as if in the arms of its nurse. . . "Look, look with both eyes. . ." and the staggering succession of the *images*, glues the spectator to the spot, the amateur filmgoer in a cinephilic perfusion; to the point of almost "seeing that and nothing else" in the film, namely, the optical pauper chained up in his cave, being force fed with the visible.

That "Grande Bouffe," its self-portrait is the film by the same name, that iconophagia that 100 television stations will reactivate rather more than satisfy. That hunger to escape that the novel's ersatz tries to satisfy but only sustains, corresponds to the need to see more and more of the visible in the visual, to burrow into the texture of the visibility of even the slightest spectacle, to let one's eyes roll in the flesh of the world. By definition, the perceived always opens onto more perceptions. And Eros is always mixed up in it, its passion, or drive if you prefer, to slip into every crack, fold, look, curl, hiding place, fissure, into every piece of that exposed skin of the visible, to open the way for our impatient imaginations—impatient to imagine the worst or the most treasured, which are its basic correlates. Under such voracious scrutiny, the coquettish visible withdraws more and more, composed as it is of a density which hides, but which has nothing to hide, which asks only to be discovered. Whereas a "great film"—and that is the secret of the work we are trying understand—only *pretends* to play up to the imagination; by luring his imagination this way, the film tries to awaken in the spectator an awareness which would exceed the images, to make the spectator alert to something between the images, next to the images—but whose surfaces bear no lacuna—alert to that which is unimaginable, which is there held in abeyance, but for what *other* imagination, for what thought, on the other side of the unbreakable wall of the visible? The work that we are citing here under the name of a masterpiece,

a "great film," claims, cares for, absorbs, mobilizes, attracts, seduces, "lures" in the strategic sense, and sets into motion the enormous potential that the ocular curiosity has for the "imaginary." *And it suddenly frees us for the other part.* But what other part?

What is interesting in a film, its invaluable touch, is not going to be adding one image to another, stuffing the eye, that extra eye which "envisions" even when it is closed; no, what is interesting in a film has to do with giving some other "food for thought" to the mind; not a concept, but a thing from among things; what poetics in its reflection calls a rapprochement, made up of things which are not reduced to their juxtaposed limitations to the apposition of their separate borders, but to their quasi-unity; that is, to give to the mind, not the abstract mind, something of the relationship vaguely perceived between things to offer it the *between,* the being-together, of a non-associative multiple unity; an "image," indubitably, but understood here as the intuition of a way of being, one with an other, one by an other, of things which might not be, taken side by side, the sum of their objectal parts. The being in semblance of the assembled whole appears.

The work gives *that,* under the guise of a deception, actually deceiving the avidity for the to-be-seen [à-voir] which is also the to-possess [a-voir]. Under the guise of this first lure, or ruse, of providing images on demand, indefinitely, the work of the image itself, even while bringing to the psychological imagination its dose and overdose, will be to try to attract the imagination to another thing, somewhere else, not in the visible, toward these other images, not photographic ones, but the ones that Baudelaire worshipped; these rapprochements, this being-like or like-ness of which everything that is is made. To give to this second power of self-representation the chance to not perceive, to deprive it of every thing, so that—in Valéry's words—it might see; to give, you might say, under the guise of images, that which is not shown because it cannot *be* shown; Mallarmé would have said to *suggest.* Every thing is perhaps visible, but the totality is not. What I mean is: how to "represent the world" since the world is not given as a being among beings, but is given with the very things of which it is composed. A world, a whole can be made everywhere—of every thing. The world, with different kinds of *diminutives* being-valid-for-the-whole mediates for the rapprochements. Its media-

tion endows the parts with symbolicity; it is as parts-of-the-whole that the parts can be brought closer. Art risks the all for the all; and the invisible, which is not the visual provisionally removed from sight, not something supernatural to be contemplated in an otherworldly afterlife, but figurative thought, a thinking figuration; the invisible is in turn made figurative by the "other side of the mirror," that fable which is a fable only because it cannot be taken literally.

The sayable opens up a *re-solution* in the terrible *continuity* of the visible; the two roll around together in the darkness of sleep, they embrace and fight in a dream or in opaque insomnia. The sayable tears itself away.

In *Shoah,* the voracious curiosity for things seen—that a film thinks it satisfies, or if it is a genuine work, pretends to sustain—this curiosity is *disappointed,* since the great nothing to see which is said to be unsayable, not only is not "present" in the visible, in the hallowed ground of the "depth of field" which outlines, reopens, opens up, the camera returning to the "very" places, but is also hardly imaginable *in its absence* because the few traces are covered over, that is, traces which could pass for the vestiges of things other than the ones we are talking about. It never was an actual thing, present, it was euphemism and abstraction for the conceptual planners of ordered genocide, crushing routine of torture for the executing henchmen, and "personal" annihilation of the incredulous victims.

Only a prophecy can see that no-thing which sought to make itself into an object, "the illumination of a people." "Shoah" changes the disappearance into the prophecy of what was. The without-precedent which precedes us has disappeared, leaving witnesses who have to be persuaded that THAT was what they witnessed; to change the unbelievable into the being-of-what-was, which, in essence, is not abstraction but sense.

What does the film "show," in place of the "annihilated"? Faces. The face is a strange *visible thing.* It is the only look of the visible which looks as though it were speaking; which suggests; which "wants to say, and thereby to mean something." Unlike any other *visible thing,* the face is *expressive,* like looking at the lips of a person dying and trying to hear "the last words"; it invites an interpretation, a reading. Physiognomy, and eyes, are said to "speak." But they never really say anything; they make like saying.

And their quasi-speech, their "mute testimony" is all the more fragile and threatened with non-being, (refutable, negligible, useless, vague) when the *expression* is alluring; when their expressivity is ambiguous. The face must then overcome, without bearing any special sign, without an "objective criteria," without a verifiable measure of a univocal relationship of sincerity to truth, in the realm of ambiguity, essentially its own, the face must overcome, I am saying, the constituent lure of intention forever both tacit and potentially counterfeit; it is that double-edged obstacle: of the mask each one bears which mimics the intention assured by the social code, produced by the mask for the addressee, that is, the conventional "reading"; and the multi-vocal "sense," according to the surroundings and the legend (the "context": the same eyes that you see "wide with horror" could be read as "wide with greedy appetite" if the *thing seen* by the same face were actually a pastry instead of a massacre). And the expressivity passing from face to face is communicated—everything becomes, can become, "like the face": prosopopeia. Contrary to what the doxa affirms with all its might, because this is the lure in which it anchors its realist confidence, the equivalence of clear signifieds to stable signifiers, the faces are interchangeable, and the torturer's face, "whose spineless cruelty jumps out at you," is instantly metamorphosed *according to the context* into "a calm fellow, good-natured and innocent," and so on.

Yet belief is finally all there is, it is the space of our encounters, the ether of intersubjectivity, of communication; in other words, faced with the possibility for deception, which is universal ("the evil genius"), there remains only a belief in the possibility of an oath to truth made by the eyes and the lips. In order to cast out the Evil Genius, which is co-extensive with the difference (between seeming and Being) "interposed" everywhere, there is only the presupposition of the priority, of the precedence of its adversary, truth.

Shoah: what is the "context"? Life has covered it up. What is the legend: the tale of the tales which Lanzmann seeks out. In this context, with these "legends," the face speaks. Everything had to become, *through their work, like a face* which disillusions, which re-emerges, like a dawning, after the nightlong battle with the Evil Genius.

Recalling the words of the Osuna Indians recorded by Malourie who was surprised by the *nudity* of their bodies in the constant cold, I would say of *Shoah:*

Every part is like the face. Everything becomes the prosopopeia of a truthful face.

***

Brick walls in ruin, windswept foliage, old wagons that look like they could be museum pieces; horse-drawn carts all along the narrow provincial roads of present-day Poland; pedestals of "shacks" in "Roman" ruins; here and there commemorative stones, not even kept up, effaced by sprouting anti-Semitism; unkept cemeteries, mossy names disappearing; one could imagine baby rabbits under the barbed wire of some factory; the disappearance of the ghetto amidst the meager avenues of modern Warsaw, modernized with all the "modern" things, namely, those things which never stop being *modernized.*

***

Given the train

Is there one thing whose very essence would be to figure elusive time? It is movement, the figuration of time, the fable of time. Our time, the time of which we are made, our dyingness, our perishing longs for its figure, seeks affinity with a mobile—desire for an image where recognition trembles: a desire to approach what has approached us, what "offers itself" for our self recognition; rare works that move us, even to tears, to cry out "yes! that's what it's like!"

Certain artifacts, certain works, play their parts better in the game, in the staging of the general representation of existence: they resemble most closely the unknowable, "we are embarked" (Pascal); we are on board, aboard death's train. The train overflows, from both sides. The limitless is transformed into tracks, a time funnel. Some pursue, some flee, and that indecision-in-division of this apparently double, ambivalent goal, (where are we going? what are we fleeing? what are we catching?) elicits the troubling exhilaration of traveling, and now of contemplating the emblem of travel: the train.

Shoah is a film of trains. We know the "final" destination. We, as spectators, are seated in the armchair of destiny; we know where they did not know they were going. The film's poster shows a scowling Charon, the Czech engineer, as he sticks his head out the locomotive window, he squints his knowing eyes, and we know what gesture the compatriots imitated again and again, the slitting of throats, omens along the tracks. The train's way was the Way.

The logistical problem of the extermination was a problem for railwaymen, station masters, conductors. And when Primo Levi and his own, once freed, take a road back, it is the purgatory of *Truce:* a convoy deports them again, or transports them, ***hesitating*** for months on indifferent tracks.

***

Emotion depends upon a *tableau* which is first of all a relationship to the world within the world, the world entering into the world, making a world, against the current in the flux of perception.

The work needs emotion to be born, to proceed and to arrive at completion; and emotion needs the work, emotion itself being "aesthetic," being itself called forth by something in life like a tableau, which tears itself away, escapes, detaches itself, and then takes form in the work. The animal "life of representation" has been said to be "poor in world." *Existence,* itself attached to life, frees itself from life with each escape, opening up a view onto the visible, such that vision *glimpses* what escapes from the visible, and simultaneously glimpses the very power to see which exceeds the visible. With each escape, vision *glimpses* the difference between what is visible and the act of seeing; the way in which the visible can reflect this act at its very origin, can allow us to image the act. What might such an "escape" be?

I would like to interject a comparison here, drawn from the trivial experience of existence, in order to illustrate with an example taken from the visible, the difference within the visible itself, either the bursting open of the visible or its folding back upon itself, which allows us to glimpse the appearance of that which is to be seen, and how the very act of seeing is of interest in and for

itself: like the "spectacle" seen from a train, villages and fields, framed by the windows, against the current, this spectacle, which is detached, carved out for us by the mobile frame, brings into the real, thereby duplicating it, an ongoing, detached spectacle, against the current of our own movement, a *paraphrase* (which is fleeing the other?), and these two movements, this intersection, this tangency, constitutes "reality"; thus the frame, in turn, or the outline of the work, engraving as it does that which has been detached onto that which escapes us—and which in the world of "Shoah" hardly manages to regain the visible—carries with it what concerns us and what now is carried by our own existence, an existence which can no longer deny its implication: it has become an accompaniment forever, a music which accompanies life, a funeral march. A work, framed, outlined, thus duplicate existence, in that it engraves a distance, reduplicating a reality such that what takes place in the work returns to us; a tangential life, so that our life be understood as implicated by this work, indeed, comparable to what the work figures.

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Crying, in its transitivity, is to cry over one's self.

Crying over one's self as one is caught by, is caught up in and thereby recognizing it—the disproportion between one's being and that for which one exists; out of that disproportion, a work of art makes for a fleeting encounter, a junction; crying over oneself . . .It is the work of art that we see in life itself which causes us to cry, the work within life in glimpses.

What carries off existence, detaching it *from* and attaching it *to,* its own life, is emotion. We would need, modifying somewhat the famous expression of Maine de Biran, to talk about a *pouvoir-soi-émouvant,* whereby action and passion weave themselves together pronominally, reflexively, analogous to the Greek middle voice.

The tableau makes for an interface, belonging both to existence because it has escaped, and to the work of art, which has composed it. Given up out of its existence to the *poesis-mimesis* of the work, which must in turn render it, in the good-rendering of the work, it is finally *emotion* which dictates, not *sensation.* "Emotion" is a word used to name the experience one has of a

work; such that the desire "to work," to make, to render a work of art becomes "catching," is "communicative"—as one sometimes says of a disease. Emotion is the relay from work to work, it gives rise to a work taking form, a parable; works transport emotion metaphorically into yet a new form-taking. Even though I can only contribute here, vaguely, to such a relay.

***

Shoah gives us the tragedy of the Occident. Why say *gift?* Because the tragedy of it slips away, escapes us: we no longer know how to receive it. It is a gift because, while abiding by the law of the impossibility of representation, the *law of silence,* if you will, the work cuts across it, here in a singular way, goes beyond it in spite of itself, and like someone who finally returns, who doesn't know how he "could possibly" have gotten out of the zone of interdiction, and who offers us what he has brought back from there. Here the impossible is the underpinning of everything—the entirety of a work in its "diminutive" relationship (Baudelaire) to the whole which surpasses every part.

What we have is a film, shedding light on both the tragedy and the film, each illuminating the other—"exchanging the reciprocity of a proof." How could a film, *this* film, both produce and offer the tragedy of our times? Gift and work, an offering and a production, together they constitute a circle, belonging to one another as a reciprocal condition, like the *exchange* of "friendly services."

There was an actuality to the present for some Jews and some SS agents, each time, every week, an endless massacre, thousands against hundreds; let's try to "imagine" that. What kind of *present* was it? Some Jews to whom the thing happened were "objectively"—to use totalitarian language, stalinian, we are forced to allow it in, in this case—were, then, objectively, working for the SS. What took place, without its taking place for the world, without the knowledge of others in the world, the Allies, the "German people," everyone who *had a stake in it:* what took place disappeared. As for us, petrified and cathartic "spectators," we see the absence of its trace: in the wind of the forest that has grown back, the mass grave, not even a mass grave, but the knowledge of the site of a mass grave, known to us only now. We cannot believe our eyes: there's nothing there—only the wind. The communal

grave is more empty than it was when the Jewish slaves emptied it to burn the remains. Is it empty? Hardly. It is full, filled with ignorance. The "lake of ashes" as it is called, would be a more appropriate name for a lake in China or for a spot on the Moon.

The Quest for Testimony struggles with two double refusals: the refusal of the German who says, "I wasn't there. It wasn't like you say it was." The refusal of the Jew: "Don't ask me to remember; I don't want to relive the past. The ones who were taken, the ones who were deported, never knew what was happening to them. They were gassed without believing it."

***

Is it a tragedy? At first it seems that none of the characteristics that define "tragedy" are found in this work. Even if it is made up of that which is terrifying and pitiless. An imitation of the action does not take place, can never take place. It was only under certain conditions that the actors in the tragedy became "actors" in the film: actor-victims, sought out by the playwright (Lanzmann) for minor parts to figure in the film, they were even repulsed by the idea of figuring, of witnessing. Had the scene been a theater set, it could even be that they would not have managed to overcome such an impossibility. But the film's set is mobile, furtive, interrupted; it "doesn't exist"; the set is what the thin translucent veil frames when the "shot is taken," taking the veil, everywhere, on the other side of which the actor, who appears, has no idea of how he might be seen.

***

The survivors are like children of their own selves, each one born of the person he had been in his young agony, child of his own dying-ness, and thus re-born, not a graying father, riddled, we might say, who left his son dead "out there," at Auschwitz; but sons of their own survival. They didn't know that they were capable of it, uneasy about the very terror of it, superstitious (could the evocation of it re-activate the catastrophe?). . .and given the strain of bearing witness, of "playing their role as witness," of "miming the action" and of inventing the words that would fit—since a "literary" dialogue here could not be re-written, learned, recited.

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Charged. To give witness against that time, against oneself; to be a witness. The burden of time is heavy. To be a burden to oneself. Almost half a century has passed. Why all this time, this waiting, this passing of witnesses? Fifty years after, some of them rising up out of those years, as if purgatory came *after* their hell . . .The perishable witnesses continued to perish "during that time"; postponing the work's return to that time, ten years of recollecting that time and of fighting against time, both were necessary for the elaboration, *in extremis,* of this extreme testimony against the darkness of the "Dark Times."

***

But not all representative relationships to the action, to what happened, have disappeared. And the inquest itself is a desperate quest for the resilience of Tragedy, the desire to arrest the impossibility of this "Tragedy": "Oh you who have returned, and who have shrouded your memory in your second life for so many years, and who haven't spoken, haven't told all, to your own children, oh you, survivors even to yourselves, show us what was!" One of the most unsettling sequences (and this superlative is relative, it would apply to any sequence each time I evoked its evocation), this one shows the barber of Tel Aviv, Abraham Bomba, who managed to "escape," as we say, more appropriately who was saved, from the gas chambers at Auschwitz, as Lanzmann implored him, Lanzmann's voice, his suppliant "parallel," sober and somber: "Keep talking, you must, I beg you, you know that you must!" Let's say this: the film *shows* (and only the film; nothing else showed us that); which is to distinguish between the two possible meanings of "representation." According to one (what I describe as *showing),* the film does not represent, it delivers, makes us see, offers, what did not take place, any place, outside of itself, *this film:* bare essence which the illusion proper to films reinforces, namely the illusion for me the spectator, that I am *hic et nunc,* for the first and only *time* with each "showing" of the film. I receive what the film shows on such and such a day at such and such a time, and there is only that time.

But the film also *represents,* in the sense that in its own production, it displays the act of producing; the artifact carries within

itself the artifice, and because the film cannot not exclude that, its trace remains. The making of the show is also the show. And in the production of "Shoah" the burden is not given to a Claudelian Announcer, happy to raise the curtain himself, to put himself center stage: "You are going to see what you are going to see!"—because the pleasure of creation is out of place here; like a craftsman, who in his weary quest, relentless, yes, intent on the deceased event, in that quest for the thing itself, looking for Tragedy too, for the tragic work which had become impossible: how to represent the action, by *mimesis* or by *diagesis?*

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What we are talking about is the event that led Adorno to that famous extreme position: "After Auschwitz, is poetry still possible?" From tragedy to "Tragedy," the same word has always named what occurred and its representation, the thing of the past, the thing immemorial, as well as the setting into motion of the thing, its implementation, adaptation, signification. Why, in the case of Auschwitz, did the real tragedy, historical and interminable, preclude its homonym? This film is a response to the question that Adorno posed for his contemporaries: "Can *we* still. . .?" Given the fact that a poem, a work, is still possible, because it is, here, this is a work which relates to Auschwitz, which re-establishes a relationship to Auschwitz, which brings to an end the interminable wait, which allows us to relate to the testimony of what Auschwitz was, to relate under *certain* conditions, namely testimonies without documentary and without a fictional plot.

***

All connection with action has not disappeared. "Unity of action" is still at the heart of the representation. But what has become of the dialogue? What is the story about? How does the terror filter through in its quasi-absence, if not as what the images do *not* show—only wind in the forest; no ripples on the "lake of ashes"—if not as what the things said do not manage to say; and how does pity go out towards others, almost going too far (dare we say, it wanders fleetingly toward one of the executioners when Lanzmann traps him by saying his name after promising not to?). And what kind of *catharsis* might be possible, in the end, beyond

hatred—is that possible—something more powerful than revenge, is such a paradoxical thought possible? I will also try to express that towards the end.

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Of course, it's still *representation*. Something, something disappeared, monstrous, a no-thing, unbelievable but documented, which essentially has to do with testimony, and with the conditions of the implausible; something, a frozen rumbling, buried, harried, sparse, all over the earth, forever unheard-of, both clandestine and weary, worn down in the end, like Kafka's Prometheus on his rock, "unclarifiable," on the way to disappearing one last time, which finds its reunification, the union which allows the composition to be, to have been.

Unity of time? Again: it has to do with making a contemporary time exist for us. Unity of place? The Earth; Tel Aviv, Treblinka, New York, the Ruhr, Vilna, Warsaw. . .The diaspora is no longer the same. The scattered and strewn constitute a place, the archipelago of languages. Nothing will have happened, will have taken place except this place? The forest in Vilna, the station in Belznec, the field in Poland, the clearing in Sobibor, the snow of Vermont . . .Unity of action? Unity of concern, unity of the One necessity: there are a few cases, here, to *represent* hundreds of thousands. It is "representation," because a very small number, a few survivors, are filmed, faithful and in tears, before us, spectators as numerous as a census; for the masses, the enormous tribe, twelve-tribes-to-the-power-of-twelve of the dead whose great numbers made up the implausible.

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Last words must be kept as a heritage, a survival of words about the end so that there may be history. A descendant, Lanzmann, requests the legacy, claims the malediction. Donee, donor. He is in the film, author, minor figure, voice at the edge of the film. On the set and off; he implores, demands, that it be passed on. He asks that something be told. He brings about a dialogue with his montage—it is his ubiquitous absence. The afterword, his labor, creates a present, an audience for a present, a presence; he reconstitutes. The montage creates a rapport, estab-

lishes a "dialogue of the dead" and of the deaf, and between languages. Donor at a distance, the film fabricates a realistic and rhetorical scene for a rehearsal which will not be performed "fictively"; the ghost-like rehearsal of a last judgement directs the action which can only speak, without ever showing "mimetically what took place." Beyond justice? Beyond condemnation? *After* Nuremburg, on another level than the judgement of judges, a judgement beyond punishment, without appeal.

***

Lanzmann: neither judge, nor jury, but collector, evocator, not a prosecutor, but with the power of attorney; not a witness, but attendant to witnesses, assessor, court clerk, one sworn in, proselyte. His voice wants to know. He is the instance of insistency. Like Ulysses (which is not to "do literature" here, but to remember that literature, made from our history, makes our history, makes us what we are and what we have become, with works), like Ulysses he searches the realm of the dead; he *digs* the common grave, a little blood, a few tears, brings the shadows back to life, forces the shadows, the ghosts hidden among us, to return, to reassemble, to cry for themselves, for what was, and for us. "The word is convincing" (Gorgias), with the appeal of his neutral, polyglot voice, the languages return with voices, intoned: French, German, English, Yiddish, Polish, Hebrew assemble, and the German language is also the victims' language, it speaks again, language of Canetti, language of Celan. Each speaks his own language, and everyone understands.

***

In order for an emotional event to be re-enacted, "enacted" for the first time paradoxically as "re-", played out before us, produced; in order for a work to be, there have to be defining conditions, "rules of unity." The norm responds to a threat, defends itself: it devotes itself to making a being-one be, or a being-like-one. It is a check against complete dispersion and loss. *As never before;* this time or never again: so that what has escaped us does not escape us; so that we recover ourselves. To reunite them, place, time and action, one with the other, the *where* of the earth, the *when* of an at-the-same-time like-one-and-all and the *what* of

the drama. Emulating one another, one with and by the other. In order to find it? What? History. . .It's a memory that has been to hell. This work has to do with bringing it back here: something new takes place which finds its unity, like a painting that has been put in a frame, fleeing but always re-framed by the camera. Unity of place: the screen, the film, in it the repeated scenes of witnesses forced to tell what cannot be told. Compelled to tell, to put together the pieces of the story, to resuscitate a vanished center for the narration that had disappeared, can a present (1987) be joined to such a past?

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Among the conditions of the *causa materialis* that we can read and enumerate *a posteriori* about this work, those which it had to satisfy, by reinventing them, in order to be made, we can indicate the following:

—the length of the film: nine to ten hours, or more, like a Claudelien "day"; like a night "just like" the Night of the world, reduced enough for a symbolization to be sufficiently elaborated, to allow it to contain for example the sobs therein, at the same time, it could last twice or x-amount of time as long;

—parade of witnesses, so decisive in their obedient initiative, working under the "double bind," that they can reverse the course of things, and now that they have begun to speak, now that they can attract innumerable testimonies, possible, new, adding stories to the stories;

—exclusivity of the cinematic, singularity of the "cinematographic" art, so well adapted to this reunification and re-education of severely burned memories, it would have been impossible to bring the diaspora of last witnesses together "here" without a camera; cinema allows for the ubiquity of this scene; they came here from everywhere; that "here" can be everywhere. What's more, it makes repetition, the "projection" of the film, possible an indeterminate number of times. What could have escaped us in the forgotten has escaped—"once and for all."

***

And the story? Extorted from the silence of the actors, from the victims, from the survivors. Lanzmann, taken in like a son by the

families, with his fleece of film on his shoulders, hears what the children could not get out of their parents, who refused to pass it on, because what is to be passed on is a benediction. It is the struggle that results in the gift: the struggle with the angel of terror, the gift of the story. Pious extortion, vows obtained in *extremis* by the persuasive word in the name of memory, of the tradition which must not be broken, which must gather what still eludes gathering, in the name of humanity. Is there, is it possible that there was, that there might be a "crime against humanity"?. . .And hence still a "humanity"?

If, as we see in the tradition of the Sublime and the sublime of tradition, if "literature," art, is the passing on of the last spoken words, and of the promise of the book's relationship to the earth so that the earth might be the promised land in light of the last words, then here the sublime, inverted, is perpetuated, the son extorts and obtains the *malediction*.

***

Work unity

In order for there to be a unity which would permit us to talk about a work, about this film, to give it its proper name, there must be unification, that is, a composition, a unity of unities. At least, two levels, "a double articulation."

There is reason to analyze *Shoah* as a work by looking at the unities, the unified series, the subsets, which compose the work's unity. To distinguish, for example, between the series of "tracking shots from trains"; the series of "tracking shots taken on foot along the tracks," the series of face to face interviews, of the "envisaged."

***

The work takes its time, develops, in the absence of any *action,* represented mimetically by the *actors* in speaking roles which converse and report, not fit to be shown for two reasons: the traces have disappeared, and the witnesses of the dantesque traces, risen from hell, are repulsed by the idea of testifying, afraid of suffering too much, of reliving their death, as if there could only be *akmnesia* and *paramnesia* in this, as if the mnesia were a re-

dying which they had a right to elude, in the end; mimesis and memory, impossible together.

Nothing will be seen of what they bring back. We see the moor, the road, the forest, the river of song, the lake of ashes; in the lake of ashes there are no more ashes; on the moor there is nothing. We see horses, the faces, tears; and the Ruhr and the Polish villagers leaving mass, the Israeli barber shop. We see things we see today, scenes from our world, and we hear their story, the stories, the answers to questions that Lanzmann poses today, questions that look at a field that exists today, Polish peasants, ugly buildings "in place of" the Warsaw ghetto. Everything they talk about has disappeared, they are the last protagonists, witnesses to what cannot be exhumed: no autopsy, no ex-cineration, in the clearing there is nothing but the wind, in the lake, no more ashes.

***

We will not see "what man sometimes thought he saw"; we see their eyes which believed they saw. The event, called Auschwitz, which happened like something that breaks apart homonyms, that split up (until "Shoah"?) the relationship between tragedy and Tragedy, and that at the very site, on the threshold of the extinct site where the tracking shots take us back, carrying our eyes along the way, as if our eyes could retake the trip on the train of the dead, our eyes through the eyes of the survivors and of all the dead, the event comes to us today like the light of a yellow star, already extinct, forty shadow-years AFTER.

Could the tragic speech be made possible by an account of the final account of the disappearance of all that was the tragedy of the "Vernichtung," of the annihilation, like the witnesses' enucleated eyes, bulging, blinded by the horror of what they have seen; we look at blinded eyes—the eyes of witnesses who sometimes, strangely, have aged little, hardly greyed, timeless contemporaries of something that "stopped time," or quasi-mute like the "last Jew" of the Polish village surrounded by the current parishioners. As though the land of "nothing is left" where the camera transports us, the absence itself of traces of the "final solution," showed the radicality of its devastation.

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Holzwege: Paths in the woods leading nowhere. . .

"All" the forest paths of the world, seen through the camera *Feldweg* and *Holzweg* at this moment, become[1] covers on a common grave, cenotaphs of mud, knolls, ditches filled with death: death's comings and goings took place here, made a place here, traces, covered over. The forest paths have become monuments of death's path that the camera stalks, on foot. It's there. Is it here that they were cut down, "coldly"? It is surely here.

Like a pensive mourner returning to an ocean grave, to the nowhere of the aged ocean, to the place that is no place, where the one he loved drowned, that's where she disappeared, and her disappearance with her, he tries to envision the void of disappearance, there is nothing, only the water as it rises and falls, "there it is, yes."

There is, there are. There that great indefinite pronoun is; is that, here. What we name "there," is, there-itself, there; and what is there? What follows; what is going to speak itself.

***

The event, the one that took place, is not represented. An event takes place now before our eyes, at the cinema. Which event is it? It's the event of the testimony itself, of testimony gathered with great sorrow, great pity, with cruelty. The witness was sought out, pursued, kept awake, delivered, forced. Men take on their witness-selves—right before our eyes. The routine of everyday life, like the frozen giant of Purcell's King Arthur, does not desire this awakening, who does not want to deal with the one who witnesses; wants only his own lethargy.

This is a film. . .of a quest. But it is not a fiction; it is not a detective story, with a mystery waiting to be solved. It is, however, a mystery of the "impossible-real," which takes on its own mysterious self against their will, body unwilling, heart revolting. Nor is this a documentary; if a documentary is a camera carried over to the object under consideration and carried off with photographic

[1] "Become"?. . .What is this becoming? Here is the modern metamorphosis at work; in and through the work. Which is not a becoming-god or becoming-animal, but an anthropomorphosis by the truth of the work.

images: the coal mine, the aircraft-carrier, the ski resort, places that exist, places that the film maker went to see.

Shoah: "Neither documentary, nor fiction," wrote Simone de Beauvoir; even taken as a fabrication filled to perfection, with a determination to retrace the defects within what should have been incontestable, should have been forever unforgettable. The thing itself is the film. The film is the event; each time that it is shown.

The actors, a few survivors who do not want to relive their death, the past, some forty years later, retired or far away from their memory, just like old glories revisited, they do not want to remember having been that.

The thing-seen speaks only if, through an inversion of the ordinary way of looking, it is seen as a beginning, as a comparing, figuring, of the Indescribable, of *every thing* that comes to pass *like that.* If I haven't the rigor to recognize in what I live and see, the figure of the no-thing (*Unwesen)* that can come down on each of us, hidden in our desymbolized ordinary places and sights, if I haven't the rigor to recognize it, then senseless madness escapes us even as it comes to pass.

The SS, their leather office seat covers cut out of Jewish flesh, re-sewn into boots, gloves, shoulder holsters, black boxes, badges of fantasy, these bureaucrats of the final solution each pretending to have been the Fabrice of the unprecedented horror.

The revisionist is perhaps not so much the person who wouldn't have recognized the gas chambers when they were operating, *like most people,* seeing instead only "the selection centers for the new arrivals," given that not "every single little fact" of the life we live has the bearing of a signifier of epochal truth; the revisionist is rather the one who refuses the vision of truth, the prophecy of Shoah.

It is easier to see in the almost perfect effacement, in the disappearance of what happened, the proof of its non-existence. Especially when the catastrophe is always threatened with having not taken place; as was the case for one bureaucrat who was assigned to the "protection" of the Warsaw ghetto. For the Jews *hurried into* the ovens when they thought they were going to a work camp, the unbelievable didn't have time to take place. The work of the film constitutes the time for it to have taken place.

The kind of un-be-ableness of that no-thing, *Unwesen,* "monster," was still wandering until Shoah (which certainly is not with-

out precedents, don't forget *Nuit et Brouillard),* it was looking for a place to be.

Is there "ontological proof" of radical Evil? To believe the unbelievable is as "impossible" in the case of God as it is with absolute Evil; it calls for the freedom of thought that perhaps can only be compared to a bet. As it is for the philosopher who might set himself to extracting from the *impossibility* of diabolic perfection (or of the possibility of diabolic imperfection?) "proof of its existence"; it is from a destruction, an abolition, a "solution," as the former executioners put it, minimally, that the witnesses turn away their faces, that the historians deny, and that our belief accepts, like proof of anti-miracles, the proof that the worst of all possible worlds was, locally and worldwide.

The crime against humanity was almost perfect. It was almost . . ., it all but happened. Without corpses. Beneath "the lake of ashes," peaceful sparkling, in the indifferent Vilna forest. . .Look: the places bear the same names, Treblinka, Belznec; the station is there. The names are utterable, not censored, not anymore than the name of an American small town or Barcelona.

A crime that was never named, designated as such, in its own time. Always silenced, pseudonymized, moreover: nameless, euphemized, with conviction; no plot no actor no witness, no remains, no motive, no narration. No one thought about it, believed it, and many not only do not believe it (the "revisionists"), but accuse those who have come forward with lying. Still euphemized today, in a new phase of euthanasia.

That is why the Jews of Warsaw asked that the thing simply be known; be uttered that a partial whole of "humanity" was exterminated, *vernichtet.*

***

It didn't take place in the language. Or rather: that is precisely what has to be done, find the traces of it in the turns that language was forced to take, by insane *circumlocutions* to by-pass, avoid seeing, *saying;* the unspeakable left its trace in the folds of the detours of the spoken: everything was *euphemism.* We don't forget that "euphemism" was invented in a language, the Greek language, to avoid speaking of death itself, with silence or with antiphrasis, to censure death. But the modern "euphemism," with

the same syllables, has nothing to do with Sophocles' euphemism. Our age, euphemistic and euthanasic, has its seeds in this trait, and in the remark, reported "in passing" by a witness of Shoah, when he spoke of "the international center of information": We learn that this is (was) the name of the crematorium. It is not a pseudonym. Even today, we don't linger over a euphemism. It seems to be taken for granted, self-evident, to "pass": This nominal relationship between information and euphemism, which radiates from the Third Reich, covers the earth, contaminating its languages with a "wooden language." The blind man has become the "sightless"; the deaf, the "hard-of-hearing." Imagine the great religious Books talking about the "sightless" and the "hard of hearing."

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The very word *mortal* has become almost too pompous: as if men were no longer "mortals," for lack of the other side of their life's immortality.

If we translate *euthanasia,* following the model of "bon vivant" as he who lives the good life, let's call him a "bon mourant." We shall weld "mal vivant," onto the other effective euphemisms of hard-of-hearing and hard-of-seeing; let's call him the "mal-vivant-bon-mourant."

Unless "mortal" (and. . ."immortal"), unless they be in the plural as "mortals" has never been before, together in death because of an unprecedented massacre, "mortals" *en masse;* because of an unprecedented carnage which endows them with an unheard of mortality.

***

What does it mean to say "without precedent"? Other than that there may not have been a present for *that?* That is how the sober and intense Professor Hilbert from Vermont talks in the film. The SS, after having reproduced obsequiously the whole history, all the procedures, of anti-Semitism, they finally had to invent; but could not name that no-thing, referred to as "the final solution."

The film is the Tragedy of that. Through the film, that no-thing *(Unwesen)* becomes a sort of something, it enters into our History.

Not one blow is seen, not one echo from the floggings is audible, not one drop of blood, not one hair fallen from fallen heads is shown, is there, as a picture. The unimaginable thing is without a picture—and with this effect of the work, it "arrives," *to take a place among us,* between the eyes of the Last Witnesses, without concern "for us," (they don't look at us), between their eyes and ours, we see them but don't have them before our eyes, it comes to us as an evocation.

The conviction does not rest on the pieces of evidence exhibited. The shacks "reconstituted" by the witnesses could be artists' studios. There is the excessive interrogation of Lanzmann, and the evocation which makes hell rise up in reverse through Purgatory, toward this "paradise" where we eat today our opiate flowers.

***

What does it mean to say "without precedent"? Strictly speaking, there was no "genocide" before the "final solution." Because first there would have to be: a) a systematic, proclaimed ideology, of the separation of Humanity into sub- and super-men, lords and dregs; b) and the technology of reproduction indefinitely refinable, *perfectionable,* of "scientific" annihilation, euphemized.

***

"It is the world of the text which intervenes in the world of action to give it a new configuration or to transfigure it," the philosopher Paul Ricoeur says. This role, this effect of *intervention,* that the philosopher entrusts to the "plot" is complex, it is twisted, and an analysis like his, in response to the question, "but how?" should trace all the minute details, the twists and knots by which the work turns upon itself, digging itself further and further into its own "abyss," *in order to* re-emerge "into the world of action." The efficacy of such a refiguring "intervention" actually depends upon the work's own representation of itself in its own conforming to a "model," as it complies with a non-homothetic homology. We shall say: if it be the modeling of what is "within," or the symbolic diminution of its infinity, which *allows* the work *to communicate;* allows it to open up a world by opening onto the world which thereby opens itself by being-like, its being-like-the-fable which

configures it by *transfiguring* it; giving a world which finds its comparison in the work, and from then on exchanges a reciprocity of proofs, as it takes "form" with the comprobation of the *exchange of friendly services.*

***

All right, how does it work in the case of the work "Shoah"? Isn't this the very thing which is suspended, dumbfounded, rendered impossible as Adorno proposed when he said that there was no more *poiese (Dichtung)* possible after Auschwitz? Isn't it that what was broken off can only be resumed by a work, namely a work constructed around, and on, that absence of figurability, of "putting into plot," into fiction, into words, into comparison, "Auschwitz"? Shouldn't it be constructed on the default itself of the possibility of *poiese,* of the representation of the self?

The impossibility of putting-into-plot is assumed as such, no fiction except the fiction of the ubiquity of the witnesses assembled around the disappearance of the oven, a dead hearth; and that assembly is one only *for us* and thanks to the pressing appeal, reiterated and remote, of Lanzmann.

***

Let me try to put it this way:

From time immemorial, that is, since the primitive, ancient scene of *literature* opened up by Aristotle, the great rhetorical scene where men, divided against themselves, invent the transcendence of a Justice which allocates the roles of judges, lawyers, opposing parties, witnesses, prosecutors, silent courtrooms, from time immemorial it is Justice that sets the stage, the plot, the story: "What happened, how could you have. . .?" asks the voice of Justice which seems to descend from Heaven or Social Order. *Shoah* offers the distribution, the organization of an ancient and a new disposition of the juridical, rhetorical scene.

The unrepresentable "Auschwitz" had to be presented as a work, given as a spectacle in some kind of work; and indirectly: mediated by a performance; the solution of historical continuity that Adorno speaks of had to be exorcized; the without-precedent that prohibits seeing this past as repetition had to be summoned.

To be entrusted to memory, to our history, this thing that suspended history; so that we might *imagine ourselves in relation to it!*

***

Whereas, the God of Moses turned man's gaze away from his burning. When the leader of the Exodus awaits and obtains the passage of his God, it is with a *construction* of moat and wall, that he protects himself and can, by avoiding the fire of the theophanic "Presence," enter into a relationship with the retreat of the divine flame. But here, it is the furnace itself that has gone out and the ashes which have disappeared, been dispersed. It is the reverse, the absence and the "nothing-like-that-happened" that needed to be conjured up—re-ignited, if I may be so bold, the cinders of Auschwitz with a brilliance bright enough to project the shadow again onto forgetful, present history, on the scale of "humanity," of the *World* war that The Second War was proclaimed to be, of an apocalypse which concerns our entire Earth. What wall might we build here which would revive in the light the vanished light of the extinguished crematorium, forgotten, indeed denied?

To reassemble with the film the monumental stones, to show in its length the immense, lamentable wall, and to raise the "living stones" of words, so that the promise made to the dying, deported, put into ovens, may finally be kept, by the very ones who swore to bear witness, to not let the testimony be lost.

The mediation of a work provides an unavoidable reference to an operation which built a "wall" such that the brilliance of the crematorium could pass again among us, to set fire to history. Just as the biblical God, whom Moses can not "look upon," obliges him to turn away, to hide himself behind a *wall* and to infer from the incineration the power of his "passage," so can I risk this, in an inverse way, the unimaginable violence of Evil, "Auschwitz," in order to be seen again indirectly, in order to be replayed again *in* our memory, was waiting for a "wall"?

Stones. The stones themselves raised, these modern "alignments," this Carnac of European stelas, even with its tinge of "bad taste," that we find sometimes in modern art galleries, the orphic stones, gathered here by the work itself, enormous petrified tears,

assembled in the name of a country of torture victims, bearing their names; cenotaphs crammed with sorrow like the sorrow of Trake turned into stone, a riot of granite petrified with sorrow, gradually every great stone became an epitaph with no inscriptions, while the very tombs of memory, the tomb of "Cherniakhov," eroded, return to the rock of the "unclarifiable"; the horror of an anti-Deucalonian earth where discarded men become stones, anti-earth, anti-matter, anti-history, in blocks fallen into an "obscure disaster,". . .the Wailing Wall.

***

And all the production trembles; or the poem of the soundtrack

An accompaniment of moans? Yes, but like this: there are piercing grindings, the cries of real train cars, in other words, those of cars that the spectator sees on the screen this moment (in this frame), filmed in 1980 (for example), which pass diagonally on the screen, grinding by, and it is in the relationship of the witnesses' words, at this moment (on this "level"), to the metallic moans, that we *can* hear a kind of moaning music, a *Leçon de ténèbres*. The train that passes, in 1980 and in our earshot at today's screening, gives rise to a song, a musical relationship between the noise of the rails and the lamentations it evokes of those dying as they are deported. The sounds become the film's music, its "accompaniment," at that moment. And if the moaning makes itself heard, the song of funereal Sirens capturing a life, it happens discretely, as if by a fortuitous and inevitable rapprochement: lovely coincidence, the justice that at the moment when the convoys of the dying are evoked, all of the steel, all of the frame, all of the *train,* or as Paul of Tarsus said "the whole of Creation," all of the technical apparatus, the whole Production, moan; and everything does moan at this moment, given the moaning train cars' passing.

***

Something more interesting than death—such was the simple and incomprehensible formula (comprehensible only in the sense of an experience which gives meaning, which I am recounting, the experience of a film; the experience which has as its language

a film), such was the sentence that came to my mind as I watched the images of the last quarter of *Shoah,* and while my memory, as it saw these images, surely saw the whole film again.

Does something more interesting than death take place, in the end? *Could* there be such a thing? The images called forth this question, they "created" this livable question just as well as their response. . ."perhaps."

What this is about, problematic all the way through, the question of a fact, indiscernible and incontestable, unrepresented, enormous, evading any other relation, *mysterious,* is then the word, the question of a fact has changed into the fact of a question, this is what is given form, by a great work, this is what is given. . .

***

In the end, *Shoah* shows the Statue of Liberty through the window frame of testimonies, and Washington, the bustling life of mortal, ephemeral men, near the beautiful monuments, the great white temples, disproportionate to the smallness of mortals, under the cherry blossoms, after the war, after Auschwitz, is it another world? No, it is the same world joined by what makes it be the same world, it is the world all right; it lacked the other half of the ring, of the symbol, that the work—the film—brings back to it, so that it might recognize itself. It comes back from far away, it comes back from where one does not return.

***

"Something more interesting than death?!" Might there be such a thing after all? As if the unique concern, reference, preoccupation in our books, in our words, were not just with death, with mortality—and not the mortality rate, but existential mortality. Something happens *(through* the film; to the film; to the spectator), something happens, passes between the emblem of the image and my head on fire, which hardly has anything to do with death, is unconcerned with death, but not at all in the sense of *viva la muerte* which "laughs at dying"; something out of place; a distraction such that death is no longer what it is shameful to forget. An inversion of the pascalien "distraction"; in the same relationship, but the weights, the wrongs have changed on the pans

of the scales, it is no longer Stalin who wins ("In the end, death always wins"), and death would be what turns us away, what "distracts" us from life. . .

Let's take the risk. . .perhaps even the "relationship" has broken down, life and death would no longer be rivals, be in a comparative relationship, be (un)equals. . .Rather: side by side, separated (yet very close) by an *either/or* which weighs exchanges of goodwill; which lets "the dead bury the dead"; but very close, in life; the two *together*. Perhaps it is what Proust means in the end when he says that "even death itself is all the *same* to me" ("La mort même m'est *égale*"). Another kind of revivification.

***

If I pronounce the words "the Jews," assembling "them" from outside with this name, is it not a naming, a name calling that is "antisemitic?" How can one say "the Jews"? In my youth, such an objectifying "massing together" would have been understood as antisemitic. My Jewish friends were not "Jews." This difference, sometimes mentioned as a "point of reference" or as a "preference," did not, curiously enough, stem from religion (perhaps this was because they were not practicing, almost all were agnostics), nor from "race" (I feel compelled to use quotes, so much did the term resonate in one's ears, at the end of the Second World War, as an ugly German syllable, *Scheu, RASS! RAUSS!. . .),* nor from politics ("Israel" hardly existed at the time; my friends were not Zionists, or not any more than the French, which we all were, together); what then did the term mean? It referred to a kind of valence with an indistinct outline, covering, vaguely, characteristics. . .religious-ethnic-national, perhaps, but above all a cultivated quality, not a "cultural" one, heavy with the memory, with the history, that is, in our culture, of a possible story, both erudite and incomplete, with the history of the "Jewish people."

The designation of Jew, as it is acceptable to refer to him today, wouldn't it, as signified, be an anachronism that has returned? Wouldn't he be archaic, "the Jew," if he maintained, retained, resumed, as if inversely the motif, of the *chosen people* of Auschwitz? Archaic inasmuch as he would be taking the difference between Jew and non-Jew as real and literal?

What matters is the statement "There will no longer be either Jew or Gentile, neither slave nor Roman (. . .)." And I am not saying: what matters is Paul as a Saint one "believes" in; nor an "historical superiority" of Christianity (nor the inverse), but a word that questions us in this way: what must be done away with is not Jews or Arabs, but the literal-realist difference, fundamentalist, if it is indeed the literal reading that makes realism and the underlying identifications that make for carnage. Do away with that difference for the sake of a being-together, doing away with "like."

***

Doxa is identifying and violent: "A Jew is a Jew and Gobsek is a rogue" (in the Voltairian epigrammatic fashion).

Doxa's wall is impassable because it is too low. To get over it requires a spiritual transformation: a leap from the level where the doxa sets itself forth in the form of a trivial paradox, because that is opinion itself (Epimenides provides us the famous paradigm that I have transposed as follows: a cretin says that all *people* / =crétins / are cretins), a leap all the way to the level, or point of view, for which the paradox or oxymoronic and pragmatic truth *(optative)* expresses itself as, "We are all German Jews" (which is exactly what we are not, at the moment when we gather together to declare that "truth"): a point of view which is only tenable for the thought of the truth of the comparative thought; one is not the other, one is like the other; it is at this price that "we" can constitute a "we."

***

And those of us who are neither Jews nor German but who are like them, "trait *for* trait," because of a nonvisible trait like-oneness in the visible, sustained by thought like the *like* of analogy, entrusted to art which figures it in a work (like Shakespeare and *Shylock);* we who wish to make a *we* (according to Ducasse's wish that "poetry should be made by all") *in perhaps only that way. . .* there might no longer be "neither man nor woman neither Jew nor Gentile," but one *like* the other. How else could there "no longer be neither Jew nor Roman, neither master nor slave, neither man nor woman"; if not by a being one *like* the other. . . Because there

will always be men and women, Jews and non-Jews, but what counts is that each one be "at home" here, as the words of welcome go, the originary antidosis which essentially consists of a saying which reseals the transaction: in the word, the words, which *make for* the welcome and the silence.

And thus have we gone from Epimenides to Saint Paul by way of Lautréamont or Cohn-Bendit.

***

In the open space, in the Opening by which the world is given ("Weltet"), that inexhaustible hidden source where a "world" draws its possibility of advent; in the *open air*, let's call it thus, it is one of the words to which certain people aspire when they use the word *Universe;* in the common space, where public space is always menaced with obstruction; in the living space, if you prefer, always to be cleared anew, this freedom which "the weather today" is every morning in a meteorological sense, for everyone who gets up everywhere with a new day, the advent in the form of unfailing *seasons,* vivacious and vivaldien, which Hölderlin was content to call the ordinary spiral, "as a way of ending" during forty years of sweet madness; in the worlding of sunlight's burst into "world" where human worlds are built up and collapse, in that *bewitching flux* of the *vierge vivace et bel Aujourd'hui,* of the ever returning sea, (what a slaughter of words the poets sacrifice to the *That!);* there where "earth and heaven, mortal and divinities" meet, if it's really important to you, in that there-where of Being, in that being-there, if it really means something to you, in that widespread place where the poem is the tenant by all its locatives and lauditories. . .how then is there the all-consuming illusion that it's up to *us* ("uns": *"für uns, mit uns");* that we are made better than others, who are non-this or not-that (for example, non-Aryans rather than good-Aryans), or more historically because "historially"; *there,* right there, in that innocenting non-place of which the *free outside* is the localizing figure, the locale, allotted and for rent, the flux of "vital space," if it's important to you; that, I am saying, for all, everywhere, by everyone, at this limit more archaic than any privilege, there where must not resound a single interdiction which would restrain (itself), which would deprive; not one of those interdictions which designate, particularize, or

institute as private (and of course, "after" that, further distinctions, instituted differences become necessary, *Private:* "Do Not Enter, Do Not Post," anything you want!). How did that appropriation of the divine ("Gott mit uns"), even there, in this protective void of which all "temples" are the titular refiguration, the visible retribution, the gift in return, how could it have been proclaimed, been posted: "Forbidden to be a Jew, to be a Gypsy, non-Aryan, forbidden to be-like?"

JEROME ROTHENBERG

THE DISPERSAL

1
figures in flight,
how quickly through the forests

run & hide, their game
never over

not until the forests fall,
all forests in the world

all worlds between here
& an empty hole

the dead & living fall through
the messengers & passengers

fingers holding
coins & rings

who drop down headlong
into a world of lights

their cries have shaped with sound
remembered, with a wheel

still spinning highways
that shine with fat

the father in a field of money
lost among the spirits

who will find them, who finds
their common ground

2
it is the allure of foresters
the allure of give me more,

my hand is reaching toward you
out of its broken cloth, fingers

stained red with blood
too thick to hold the moon up

but lets it be the moon
that slips, crushes against

the pavement it is run & hide
your face, your absent eyes

fastened on mine

3
the price of bread
is what it takes,

too thick to hold the moon up,
while running beside

the factories, again
around the broken wall,

to find the road
the village where a family

of jews still lives
from there into the mystery

of huts, of caves
foremost, running from their dogs,

his fingers
dropping gold along the way

or pebbles
that the ground sucks up,

the gentile fondles
sadly, lets him trace

his heartbreak
through a loaded gun

4
from there into the mystery
of be at home

be soothed, the past
also will burn away

there is no other explanation
save what death brings

into the mystery of pain
the mystery of cut wrists,

little houses
battered by the wind

they are so in love with sleep
& other mysteries

the mystery of what you are
is what you die for,

(therefore die!)

of when he turns away
you plant a coin on him

then bow & enter
a village near the house of death

still run by jews,
still robbers

pin you against a wall
& take your gold watch

from you sobbing
in the wind, the smell of apples

in the wind, the mystery
of apples

of the white flesh, at the core
a modest drop of blood

a fire that is fire's
mystery, that holds

so many colors, you could croak
from colors

& you do

& when you do

you die

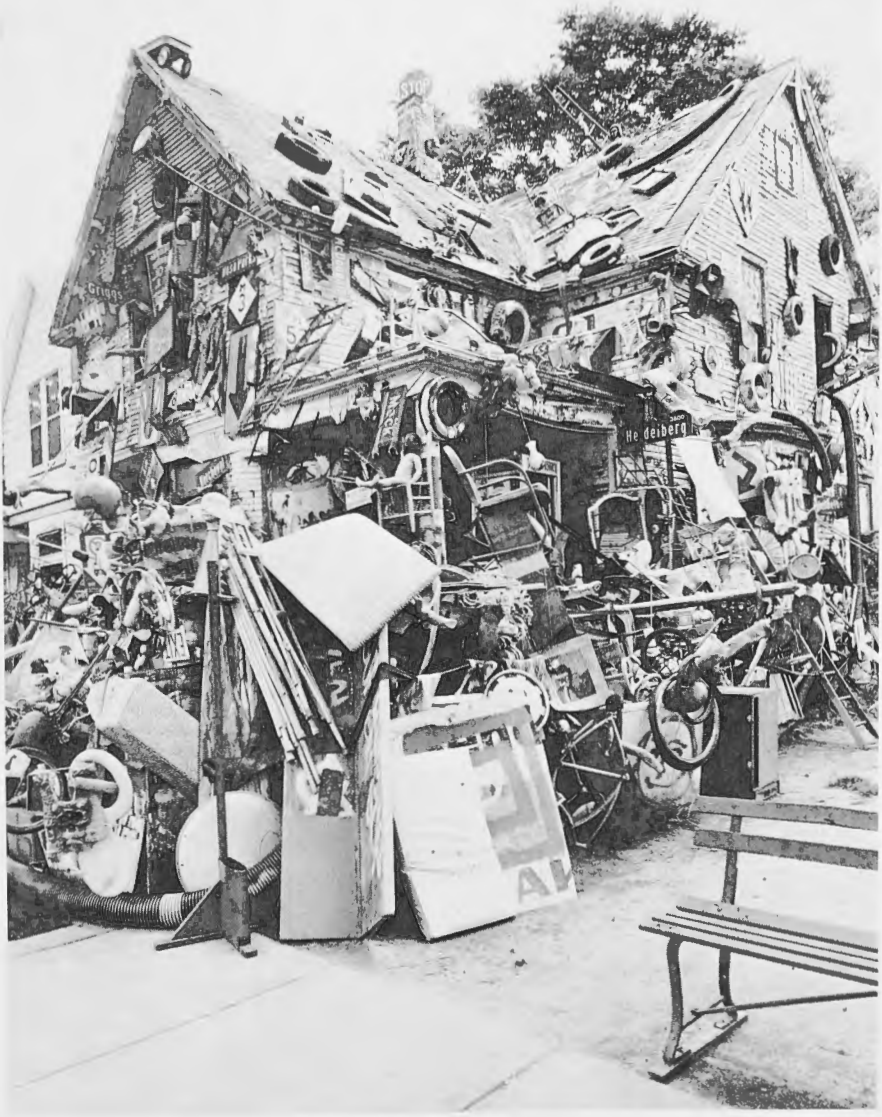
& enter through the gate
again, the secret gate
the black hole turning white

turns into night

23.vi.89

TYREE GUYTON

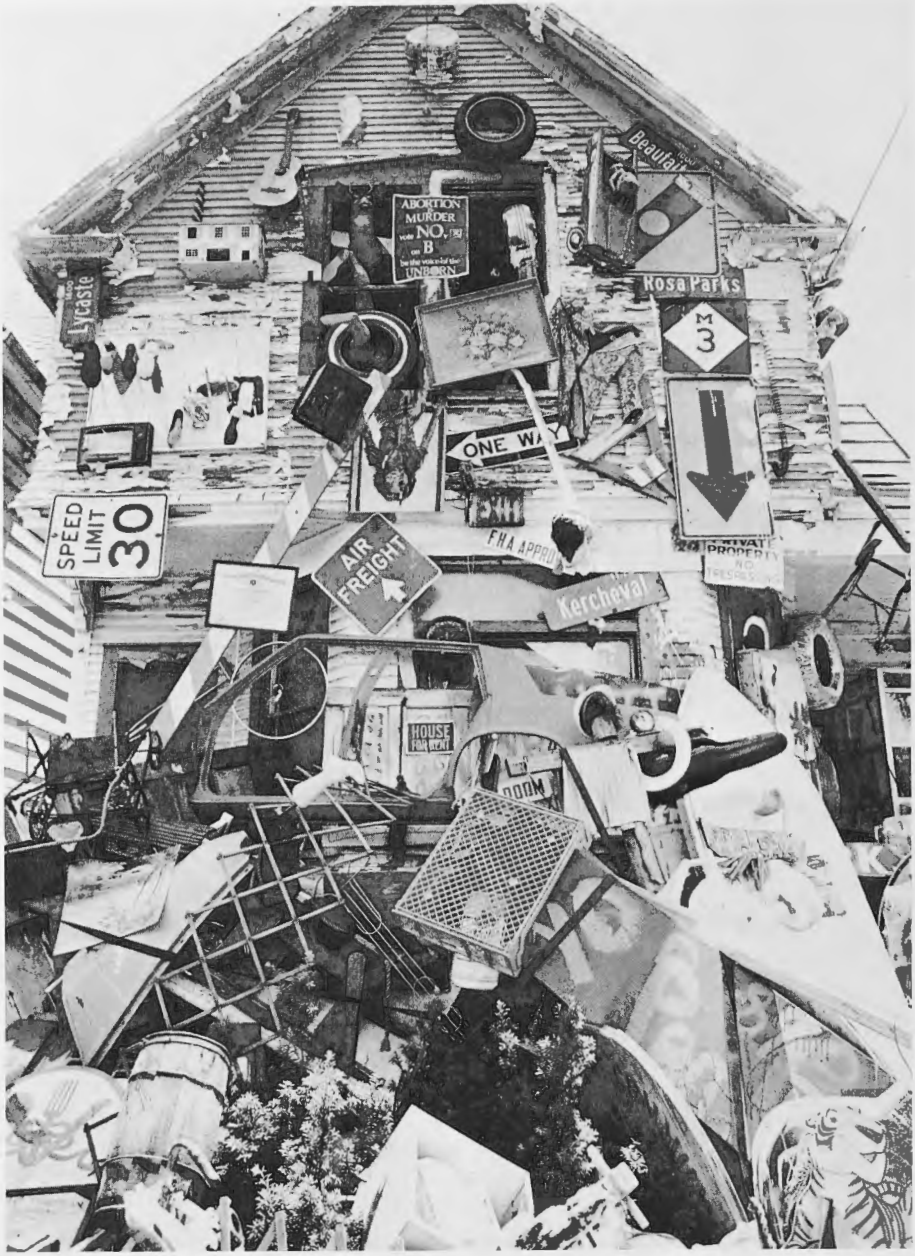
from THE HEIDELBERG PROJECT



View of front and right side
of the Funhouse.
(The following two pages show
details of the right front corner
of the Funhouse.)

3600
e delberg

AIR
FIGHT
Kercheval
BUS
STOP
1976



View of the front of the Funhouse.

View of the front of Lost and Found.

View of the left front porch
of the Baby Doll House.

Right front porch, Baby Doll House.

Right front porch, Baby Doll House.

CLAYTON ESHLEMAN

GUYTON PLACE

Of tables, wheelchairs, battered trunks & wheels
& pots that boiled up coffee nineteen ten, things
swimming on their own & finally freed
from human need. Or?
waiting a final flicker of desire.

—Gary Snyder

I find I incorporate gneiss and coal and long-threaded
moss and fruits and grains and esculent roots,
And am stucco'd with quadrupeds and birds all over,
And have distanced what is behind me for good reasons,
And call anything close again when I desire it.

—Walt Whitman

Are we here only to throw away
burned, boiled, family-container carcasses?
Is this our work: to pull doghouses, jeans, waffle irons,
out of earth's mysterious orifices,
to then shun them while we use them—
isn't everything we shape
imbued with what we can and cannot imagine?
Somehow in Rilke's era, things shined,
they were company. Wine, shaped through the vintner,
"the savor of the earth
made intelligible to man."
In 1925, Rilke wrote: "Now, from America,
empty indifferent things are pouring across,
sham things, *dummy* life. . .
A house, in the American sense,
an American apple or a grapevine over there,

has *nothing* in common with the house,
the fruit, the grape into which went
the hopes and reflections of our forefathers. . .
Live things, things lived and conscient of us,
are running out and can no longer be replaced.
We are perhaps the last still to have known such things."

At the core of America, as if in a heart pit,
whose tentacles spread out through the "body politic,"
Ronald Reagan's face, a mosaic composed
of anti-Midas-touches, disposables,
things adults no longer love
reproduced in miniature for their children,
life as non sequitur, hope booming beyond the horizon,
beyond the dump now swelling with Salvador,
Reagan face, frozen into a vomit paralysis,
want to see "his" stomach?
Take the Mt Eliott exit
off #94, south via the old Detroit "Black Bottom"
to Heidelberg, and turn right.
Tyree Guyton's *Funhouse* is on the left.
Watch it cook there, in snow or summer,
"belly of the shark," visitable belly,
panopticon of American childhood and poverty.
Black childhood. Black poverty.
It resists description. Language comes alive
via the roller-coaster of subordination.
No poem wants to consists of paratactic chains.
Thing-words, like toys, want to be played with,
raised, lowered, tug-of-warred, yes, even wrenched apart,
to peek up into a doll torso's leg socket,
or to play with mother's dolls, threadbare, faded,
new mysteries! The fascination of "Chinese boxes,"
a seemingly infinite progression as each "thing"
out-folds, finding, at the same time,
a stairway down through us, the castle keep depths
that finally trail off into dreams. . .
"Perhaps we are *here* in order to say: house,
bridge, well, gate, jug, fruit-tree, window—

at most: column, tower. . ." But orange plastic tenpin?
Sun-bleached tin world globe? Bent styro-cup?
Perhaps Rilke's "lovers" could simply pronounce
such words, in the world of Muzot—they aligned
"bridge" "gate" "jug" on the ledge of
heighted adhesiveness, when "jug" still held
the life lines of the potter's palms—
but when "*dummy* life," in which the ventriloquist,
or "belly voice," is emptied of:
take this, as my blood, my body,
plows through the potential of things to be human,
one feels, in Tonka Turbo-diesel toy part,
a vacuum, as if the very sea of consciousness itself
were parting, to reveal the deadness we somehow
always knew had been inserted into life
as we "raised" ourselves—cranked ourselves beyond—
terrible, fruitful, injurious, restorational
immersion in nature.

On Heidelberg,
what has been abandoned on the street is gathered,
returned to the sides, roofs, porches (on one:
a telephone booth stuffed with overnight cases),
sills, front-yards, sidewalks, chimneys, of 2 houses.
Imagine "Blue Poles" wrapped around houses
so terrified they can hardly
maintain structure, "drippings" 1 to 5 layers deep,
no longer "paint" but a rubble-weave of car
seat wheelbarrow basin basketball shoe
(hooked on a crutch) baby doll heel toilet bowl
trench coat hobby horse (gripping a porch gutter).
Again, to, again, begin again?
Slippage from too many breaks in the Black
child's heart. Layered scars.
O house heart, bandaged in keloidal overgrowth!
To accept the rejectamenta. To hang them,
delicately, insertedly, around
the torched house's whipped shoulders.
To refuse demolition, or the *excess* we now export,
barges roaming like Flying Dutchmen

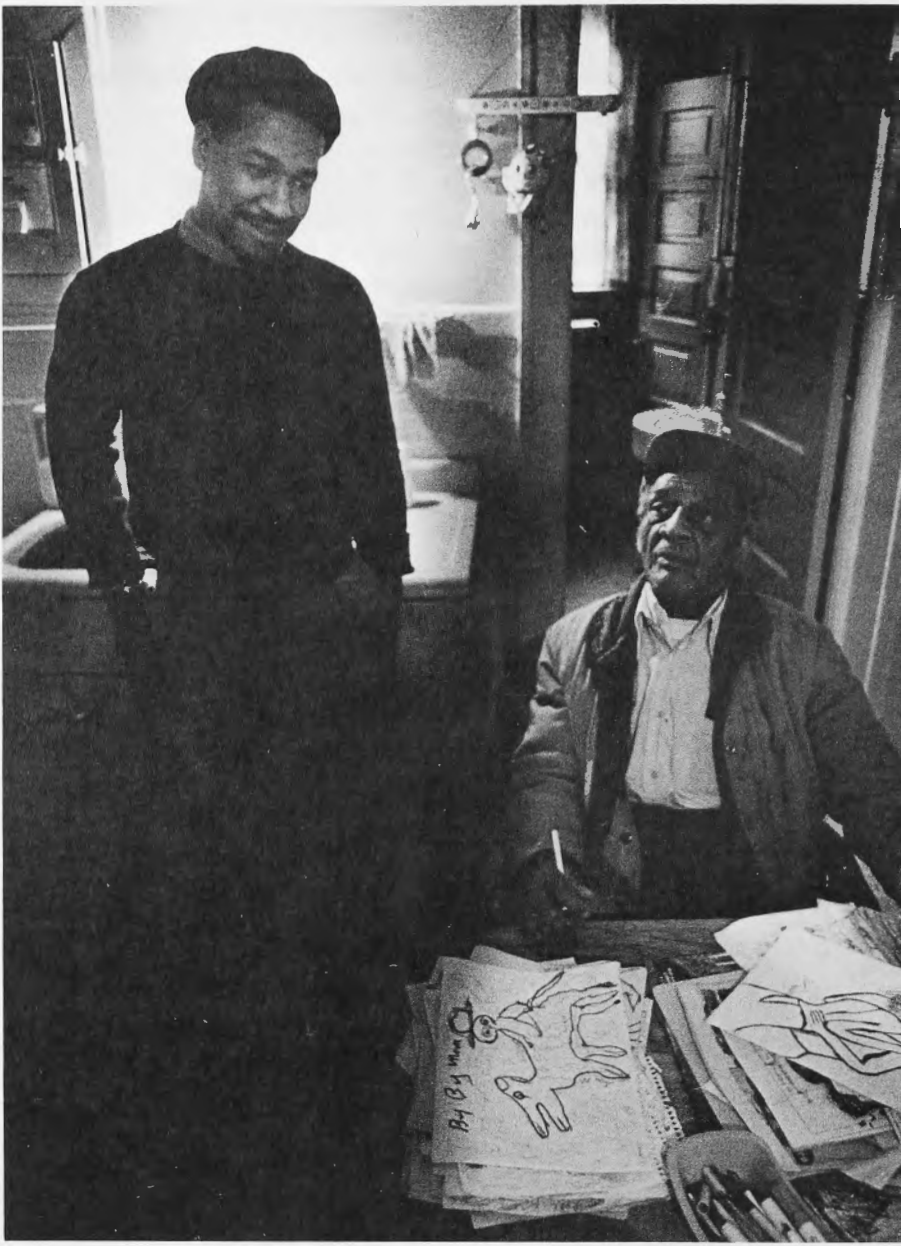
to inject their demonized loads into the sores of Haiti.
Some of the dead have no other memorial
than these rooms they last clung to.
Guyton hangs one house with tires. Tubes for the abandoned
to curl up in. Industrial ducts for imprisoned breath.
Airless tires. Dull rubber of lustreless place.
For the eyes of despair, someplace to hang. . .

Malte Laurids Brigge: "and the fusel odor of sweltering feet. . .
tang of urine and the burn of soot and the grey
reek of potatoes, the heavy, smooth stench of aging grease."
These sensations we must *imagine* here, they are indicated,
even accused, by swirls of the impeded,
as if a tornado had bored through, whirling up
line upon line of watermarks,
crossing chains of object scum,
haphazard, intricate, *chains*. So there is
a lassoed ambivalence: on the one hand, interior sensations
shut up, padlocked by the objects
that used to serve them, objects *always insufficient*—
weather-ruptured vinyl seats now "protect" emptied rooms. . .
on the other hand, these very same "things"
seem to be junk bees, buzzing, snarling about
nailed doors, as if these "homes" were sealed hives.
Thus this ambivalence, or is it delirium?
Like unwanted children, they long to flee but rush
at their parents' arms, blocked
that very moment from acceptance,
children who in their pitiful ways even seek to protect
these monstrous "loved ones." Or is it nausea?
To participate in Guyton's vision is to feel the sidewalk
roll, in sea toss, at moments they are slave ships,
no longer houses, *flagrant roods*
jut out of "neighborhood," rood hoods—
Guyton's cross bears a violin case, toilet seat,
hardhat, alarm clock (11:47), and a wig that seems to be
shot while crawling. Dada cross, yet
God's torch thrust into Black mind seems just
around the corner of each object,

if a dump could resurrect, might it look like the *Funhouse?*
A block away, the old whorehouse at 3121 Mt Eliott,
"stucco'd" with naked baby & girl dolls—
they sort of roll around the house sides,
nailed to this and that, legs arms heads missing,
the front porch a version of where the whores hung out,
soot-grimed heads, two legs in conversation,
no Afro-American faces, rather: light-brown-tinted
Caucasian-featured cuties, for Black children to idolize?
Next door, Guyton's grandfather, 93,
sits at the kitchen table, drawing with crayons
the androgyne, "In that distant chamber,
a bearded queen, wicked in her dead light,"
Stevens wrote, envisioning the tomb. Grandpa Mackey's
"queens" have arm-like tits, gigantic dicks,
curiosity of the child projecting into life,
nearing life's end, the point at which all doubles touch,
as dwelling-place here seems interfused with abyss
and paradise, or how paradise might look
from the serpent's viewpoint, in dusty shade,
having crawled for so long. One day, she raised her head
to look back upon the emptied Garden.
All that was once inside was nailed to Eden's
outer wall—and the Cherub? Nailed to the top of the wall,
strutting, as if to Sousa. The dream gone out,
all things in Babel on earth's multifoliate cross.

[March–July, 1989]

Note: The City of Detroit, which had honored "The Heidelberg Project" and had promised to protect Guyton's "houses," destroyed (without explanation) the Baby Doll House in August, 1989.



Tyree Guyton and his grandfather, Sam Mackey

ELIOT WEINBERGER

THE PRESENT

January–April 1989

On the first day of the year wars were continuing in thirty-one countries, wars that had already killed over 7,500,000 people. Fourteen of the wars had lasted more than a decade; one was more than thirty years old.

A friend, whom he hadn't heard from in the last year, phoned. They caught up on old friends. One had died from AIDS. Another had died from AIDS. One had written the screenplay for the most successful movie of the year, and was now more unbearable than before. Another had become famous overnight: in the last six months she had given 700 interviews in a dozen countries. Another was still making false teeth and was the same. Another, previously known for his lethargy, had suddenly taken up skiing and was now so proficient he was working as a ski instructor at a resort. Another had won a large literary prize, which he deserved. A couple they had known in London had moved to New York and divorced. The ex-wife, a hunchback, had had her hump removed, and was now making costumes for a transvestite theater company. The ex-husband had been found murdered, and the case was unsolved. As for his friend, nothing much was new.

The plants producing the radioactive material for nuclear weapons were leaking, and had been leaking for years. False reports had been issued to obscure these facts.

For a while it was thought that the plants would have to be closed and the production of nuclear weapons halted. This was clearly impossible, and yet the cost of repairing the plants would be enormous. It was therefore decided to change the safety regulations, so that the plants could operate safely again.

Along the highways, there was a craze for Fantasy Motels. The room with a waterbed set into an undulating floor of sand-colored carpet, like a blanket on a beach, with murals of surfers, the piped-in sound of waves crashing, and breakfast served in a beer cooler. The Arctic igloo, a dome of white plastic blocks in bluish light, with a polar bear skin rug for a bed. The Lovers' Lane with artificial trees and painted vistas of city lights seen from a hilltop, and the bed an actual '57 convertible Chevrolet.

A gondola bed in the Venice Suite; in the King Tut Room, a sarcophagus bed; in the Prehistoric Cave a slab of rock under a fresco of galloping bison. A tent in an oasis for an Arabian Night; a log cabin hunting lodge for those who dreamt of trapping; a lunar landscape where one slept in a replica of the Gemini space capsule. For the literary, the Moby Dick Room, where the bed was a dinghy and one entered the bathroom through gaping jaws. And yes, the Happy Days Cafe Suite in the Royale Hotel in West Bend, Wisconsin, where the bed was a giant sandwich and the whirlpool bath a cup of coffee.

Faith Popcorn, the president of Brain Reserve, a company specializing in these motels, explained their appeal: "There's a lot of fear and boredom out there. People want to experience adventure, but without any risk."

The new President, as far as one could tell, had the personality of a drunk at a party. His speech was idiosyncratic to the point of incommunicability, full of idioms of his own invention, like a man in love with his own voice and jokes. He liked to shake hands with a small buzzer hidden in his palm. On his first day in office, he delighted or bored his visitors and staff with a calculator that squirted water. Like a drunk, he had been, in the campaign, at one moment effusively sentimental, at the next, nasty.

In the three months between the election and the inauguration, he had devoted himself to sport. Baseballs, footballs, and even horseshoes were thrown, and members of the small finned and feathered species were slain by bullet and hook. All of his major appointees were excellent at tennis.

Outside of Agra, home of the Taj Mahal, in the village of Badh, Titu Singh was a happy child until he turned three. Suddenly he became melancholic, and would fly into a rage when anyone

called him Titu. He would say, "My name is not Titu. I am Suresh Verma. I have a radio shop in Agra. My wife's name is Uma and we have two sons." He would point to his parents and say, "These are not my parents. I'm just passing through here. My real parents are in Agra." Titu claimed that he, Suresh, had been murdered one night as he was returning home from work. Two gunmen had attacked him, and a bullet had gone through his head.

Titu's uncle went to Agra and found the Suresh Radio Shop on Mall Road. It had been owned by Suresh Verma, who had been murdered five years before, exactly as Titu had described it. Suresh had left a widow, Uma, and two sons.

Uma and her parents drove out to the village to meet the boy. As they got out of the car, Titu hugged her parents, and then looked angrily at Uma: "Whose car is this? What happened to my Fiat?" Uma had indeed sold the car.

They took Titu back to Agra, where, as Titu, he had never been. He directed them to the shop, walked in, and immediately asked who had built the new show-case. It was a new show-case.

The autopsy report on Suresh Verma showed that the bullet had entered through his right temple, ricocheted off the skull, and exited under the right ear. Titu's right temple had a curious dent, and beneath his right ear was a starburst birthmark.

Uma was photographed with the boy. She said: "I know it is Suresh. But I realize no purpose can be served. Our relationship will never be the same."

As the skin of the airplane ripped, the stranger sitting next to her was, in a second, sucked into the night, and the Pacific below.

The baby's feet tied to the slats, the crib covered with cobwebs.

In Uganda, the minimum monthly wage was 490 shillings. The price of a bunch of bananas was 500 to 800 shillings.

In the town of Mbarara, the Makeru Shalalukash Baazi—Christ in His Second Incarnation—was venerated. She was a four-year-old girl.

In the town of Mbuya, burning crosses had been seen in the sky. The Virgin had appeared, promising to create a stream whose water would cure AIDS.

The followers of the Holy Spirit Movement of Alice Lakwena, a young fish vendor, would walk into battle silently, standing erect, their bodies covered with an oil that could ricochet bullets back to the enemy rifles. They threw stones which transformed, in mid-air, into hand grenades. In this manner, many thousands in the Movement had died.

The new Vice President, having served in both, was asked what the difference was between the House of Representatives and the Senate. He replied: "In the House you can get a bunch of guys and go down to the gym and play basketball. You can't do that in the Senate."

At the Museum of Modern Art he examined an enormous glass display case containing four or five petrified and mouldy sausages, and, nearly indistinguishable from them, a petrified and mouldy piece of dog shit.

Americans believed they were living in the decade of the country's greatest prosperity. In middle-class families, however, for the first time since the Depression, it became necessary for both parents to work.

In 1200 suburban towns, infants and small children were left during working hours at identical roadside buildings called Kinder-Care Centers. These were operated exactly like fast-food franchises, with all of the materials and programs produced by a central office, and a quickly-trained staff which was paid the legally allowable minimum wage.

Parents of infants, when they returned in the evening, were given a report, written in the first person, on the baby's sleeping, eating, diaper changes and development that day. One report began: "Mommy, I have been trying to say mommy but it did not come out yet but when it does, you will be the first to know."

The new President took important members of the Congress on a tour through the private living quarters of the White House. He showed them the Monet and Cezanne paintings hanging in the sitting room, and the needlepoint rug his wife had taken ten years to complete. In the bedroom, they admired the photograph of the

President's mother hanging over the bed, the radio tuned to a country music station, and the wallpaper of exotic birds that did not repeat a single bird. He took them into the bathroom, where everyone examined the cosmetics and was amused to see that the Presidential couple threw their wet towels on the floor. Then, back in the bedroom, the President photographed each Congressman and his wife sitting on the bed. Said one: "It's kind of crass, but he's more of a buddy, as opposed to being a President."

Fluorocarbons from refrigerators and aerosol spray cans were rapidly depleting the ozone layer in the upper atmosphere, which protects the earth from ultraviolet rays. Enormous "holes" were reported over the North and South Poles, and the situation was alarming for most of the earth. Major cities, however, were far safer, as they were protected by their own pollution.

He received a catalog of 348 self-help books for small children. These included the "Help Me Be Good" series: 29 books, each accompanied by a "read-along" audiocassette, so that a child could study the illustrations without adult assistance. The titles were: *Being Lazy, Being Forgetful, Being Careless, Being Messy, Being Wasteful, Overdoing It, Showing Off, Being a Bad Sport, Being Selfish, Being Greedy, Breaking Promises, Disobeying, Interrupting, Whining, Complaining, Throwing Tantrums, Teasing, Tattling, Gossiping, Being Rude, Snooping, Lying, Cheating, Stealing, Being Bullied, Being Bossy, Being Destructive, Fighting,* and *Being Mean*. According to the catalog, 36 million of these books had already been sold.

The mass murderer was scheduled to be executed in a small town in Florida. Hundreds of people had gathered for the event, hoping there would not be another stay of execution. The local McDonald's Hamburger franchise had advertised: "Free Fries If He Fries."

The new President, with a child on his knee, declared that the revitalization of the education system would be a top priority in his administration. When asked if he planned to restore any of the money for education slashed from the budget by his predecessor,

the answer was no. The new President declared that he would wage war against drug addiction. When asked if he would allocate new funds for this war, the answer was no. When asked how he planned to wage this war, he replied: through education.

In 1937, when an asteroid of such size had passed so close to earth, they had named it Hermes. This one was given a more prosaic designation: 1989FC. If it had hit earth, it would have formed a crater ten miles wide and a mile deep. "Sooner or later," the astronomer said, "it will collide with the earth, the moon, or Mars." But what was *sooner or later* to an astronomer?

A friend told him the plot of a novel he was writing: During the Second World War, Hitler had, as a safety precaution, created a double who was groomed to look, move and speak exactly like him, in order to appear in his place at public events. Forty years later, this double is living in a retirement village in Arizona, when he discovers that Israeli agents, mistaking him for the real Hitler, are on his trail. On the lam, he happens to meet up with an elderly Englishman who had once been Field Marshall Montgomery's double. The bond of doublehood transcending politics, Monty's double helps Hitler's double to escape. Safe at last in some remote part of the world—this part had yet to be worked out—Hitler's double turns out not to be a double at all. Hitler had sent the double into the ill-fated bunker, and had escaped by assuming the double's real identity. Hitler, of course, must now kill Monty's double, the only person on earth to know his true identity.

The average American car ran 18 miles on a gallon of gas. In Sweden they were manufacturing cars that ran 70; in France they had developed one that ran a hundred. It would have been cheaper to give every American, for free, a new car that went at least 40 miles on a gallon of gas then to extract all the oil needed to supply the existing cars.

In prison for murder, after years in prison for rape, robbery, and burglary, he escaped, and held two small children hostage until the police shot him dead. Not an unusual story, except for one detail: he was completely blind.

The Lieutenant General, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Drug Policy, defended the practice of randomly testing government and military personnel for drugs: "Random testing is an honor. I like to be random-tested. It tells me I'm clean."

At the 42nd Street subway stop, passengers entering and leaving the train were forced to step over a man lying completely naked on the platform.

Heinrich Heine, in Paris in 1832, had written: "Near the Porte St. Martin was a deathly-pale man on the damp pavement, struggling for breath; staring bystanders said that he was dying of hunger. My companion reassured me, however, that this same man died every day on another pavement in a different street—in fact, that this was his way of earning a living: the Carlists were paying him for this performance in order to arouse the people against the government. It would seem, however, that the pay for this work is pretty poor, since many of these people actually do die of hunger."

He found himself jealous of democracy as it was practiced in the Soviet Union. There, voters were allowed to cross off all the names on the ballot. If enough voters voted for no one, no one won.

When someone died, it was the custom for friends and relatives to visit the funeral parlor, sign their names in a register, and look at the face of the deceased, embalmed and laid-out in an open coffin. This was, however, a time-consuming procedure, particularly as one had to change beforehand into properly somber clothes. The Gatling Funeral Home in Chicago solved the problem by instituting 24-hour drive-in viewing. Without leaving one's car, one could sign the book and see the deceased on a closed-circuit television screen. Nursing homes hired busses to drive their patients through, when one of their own had died, without the bother of loading and unloading so many elderly people so many times. And Mr. Gatling claimed that the system was particularly useful when the deceased left both a wife and a mistress: the mistress could drive through while the wife remained inside. Some viewers had been known to stare at the television screen for an hour.

The new Vice President addressed the people of Samoa: "You all look like happy campers to me. Happy campers you are, happy campers you have been, and, as far as I'm concerned, happy campers you will always be."

She had married young, and divorced while her two children were still infants. For years she had raised them alone, and then she met the man of her dreams: handsome; wealthy, kind to her children. They were married soon after. Six months later, her husband discovered that he had AIDS, the result, he thought, of a single homosexual encounter some years before. For two years he had wasted away, but had not died. The children were still young, and she was terrified to take the blood test.

Things currently for sale: A hand grenade ($19.95). A booby trap: "can be screwed directly into an explosive charge for instantaneous detonation or coupled to a detonator cord for remote firing" ($14.95). A ballistic knife, the "knife that shoots": "can be fired up to an effective range of 30 feet," with penetration "three times that of a manual stab." ($79.95). A trigger activator, which enables a semi-automatic rifle to fire 1200 rounds a minute ($19.95). A laser sight, for point-and-shoot assassination capability up to 500 meters ($495). "Sexy Girls and Sexy Guns—The Video": "14 outrageous Southern California beauties firing some of the sexiest machine guns ever produced. Girls in string bikinis and high heels blasting UZIs, MAC-10s, M-16s, MP-5s, AK-47s, M-14s and more." ($49.95).

Things to read: *Semi-Automatic Rifles:* "A top-notch book for those who find military-style self-loading rifles interesting for their history, intriguing for their engineering design and a pleasure to shoot. Only a few other nations allow their citizens the privilege of handling these fascinating arms. In America, we the people grant ourselves the right to own them—a fact that makes this nation unique for its greatness."

Places to go: The North China International Shooting Academy, outside of Beijing. Under the auspices of the State Council's Ministry of Machine Industry, tourists may fire a variety of rifles, submachine guns, anti-aircraft guns, and anti-tank rocket launchers.

In the Bhati villages of Rajasthan, no one could remember a local wedding, for weddings take place at the bride's house, and there were no Bhati women. The Bhatis, it is said, were too proud to suffer the impoverishment of paying dowries. Brides were found in neighboring communities, but were expected to follow Bhati custom: At the birth of a female child, the mother must immediately place a bag of sand on the infant's head, suffocating her. Now, with changing times, there were 50 girls among the 10,000 Bhatis, all under ten. One of the eldest, the only girl in a school of 175 children, was locally considered to be the incarnation of a goddess: How else could she have survived?

The new Vice President gave the people of Hawaii a lesson in geography: "Hawaii has always been a very pivotal role in the Pacific. It is *in* the Pacific. It is a part of the United States that is an island that is right here."

He woke, and inexplicably remembered a movie he had seen in his childhood, a low-budget 1950s science-fiction film. Two bearded professors are standing before a strange machine with flashing lights. It is a time machine, and the inventor is demonstrating its use to his colleague.

He sets the dial for five thousand and something, and places a soda bottle in the machine. It disappears, and moments later a weird Cubist bottle from the future takes its place. He puts in a fountain pen, and receives a strange writing implement.

The colleague suddenly wonders whether the Phi Beta Kappa Society, of which he is naturally a member, exists in the future. He puts his "key," inscribed with the three Greek letters, into the machine. A misshapen medallion appears with some words scratched on it.

"Why, it looks like Greek! You studied classics, Professor, what does it say?"

"Yes, it *is* ancient Greek. . .And it says. . .'Help us!'"

GEORGE KALAMARAS

WHY I FLY

a letter from Bruno to Roberto Zingarello,
Italy, 1939

You're right, Roberto, I know
all about flying. But only a little.
What good is it, compagno,
when you want only
to embrace the soil
a cockroach turns through?
Love-in-Idleness I call her,
my attempt at a new brain.
Or, at least, what the townspeople
think. They'll believe *anything,*
you know. Like that story of Van Gogh
carving off, with a butcher knife,
his own left ear. It's the flying,
of course, that kept him alive
so long. He needed both ears to navigate
through the sound of paint—
a bit of blue starlight here, a touch
of orange blossom-wave there.
And, for a tonal bed, a phlegm
of starfish, lightly salted,
served on a toasted English tea-biscuit.

So, flying is the way
I think. Or, at least,
the way people have made me
out to think. Actually, it's a way
to finally turn gravity on its ass,

even for an instant. Ask the deaf.
They, too, know how to fly.
It's a matter of holding the mouth
shut, lying in your bathtub,
and listening to the ocean's
cranial lull. But you,
Roberto. You have the solitude
of Blanca. The musk of a creaking
attic in the sudden snap
of her brassiere. An orange blossom
in the dried blood
of her panties.

I can fly, sure, but I'd much rather
hug a solitary kiss. Touch the lips
of a deranged gnat. Or,
with a bit of spit, draw
on the belly of the cat,
Patchouly, the word "love,"
feeling the geraniums shift
beneath an early rain.

For every leaf that blossoms
outside my window,
some painting in my room goes parrot-red.
For every bird-wing dulling
the needles of the sturdy
firs, there is a fallen feather, somewhere,
dying of too much sparrow.
For every sparrow a woman's kiss
brings, a stain on my sheets.
And for every lightning
bug in the Sahara,
some moon weeps
below the soil
of Brazil.

Roberto, I can fly, yes.
But what mote in the horse's

eye doesn't dream
of the longitude of hay?
What ant in the fist
of a boy can't feel,
even for an instant,
the moon pouring
through its glandular
curve?

Like Blanca, eating that avocado
at the Cafe Centrini seven years,
seven months, and eight days
ago. For many years, I flew
into the molecular weight
of that pit, and still do,
at times, when I am awake or asleep
from too much sleep. When I am hungry
from too much food. When I am coffee
from too much bread. When I, too,
start believing I need a new brain.
At first, it helped me fly,
but lately, there's a bit of lead
in the touch of her lips.
A moist print on the rim
of my clay mug.
An insomniac's amniotic fluid
filling the leaves
of the spider plant
near the washbasin.

Where did you touch her,
Roberto? You see, no one ever told
me of the still clay
of breasts. I heard talk of it, once,
among fireflies. Felt the rings
of Saturn in the soil
around a carrot. So where, exactly,
my friend? Somewhere below
Brazil? Deep in the sheet's

sudden lightning? I know, Roberto.
That's flying.

If you want to know
about flying, don't ask
me, or Gardenia,
or even Vincent.
The closest I've come
is kissing the curve
of the washbasin.
It's easy, in a way.
Polish the shell
of a cockroach. Then you can hear
a grenade prowling the Sahara
in search of a green scarf.
A bit of moonlight forms
in the camel's hump.
It's a filling
of fire, a bullet, traversing
the deaf man's spacious
mouth. The tongue curls
back, the sound parts,
and—at the first sight
of clouds—a bit of blood
and water spills out
over the raised lips.

It's really rather easy, Roberto,
even if you haven't flown
in a while.
First wrap your head
in toilet paper. Next,
lay on the floor.
And, holding a flashlight
in your left hand, shine
its spores into your right ear.
Then feel the geraniums
shift, the breath
of Blanca part

the gray hairs on your chest.
And, like those topographic maps,
lift your lips a little
into an outline of sky,
looking for air.

The Arts Foundation of Michigan, a private funding agency which supports Michigan artists, welcomes *Sulfur* magazine to its new home in Michigan and is proud to provide financial support for this issue. To receive information on the AFM's funding programs, please call Kimberly Adams at (313) 871-0559 or write AFM, 542 New Center Building, 7430 Second, Detroit, MI 48202.

afM

MARTHA RONK LIFSON

TWO POEMS

THE OBJECT OF DESIRE

The elaborate celibate twilight
fog entrapped between trees
orifices filled with leggy things insisting.
Macbeth kills instead.
The driveway apron edged by heather
name of penpal at eleven
no more or less than now
casual acquaintance for focus.
The calf steams and ruts
birthing flies from her forehead
slowly towards the corral of death.
The mountains succumb to acid illness
it's an airborn illusion.
The nods enclose distance
on a road to arbitrariness
catching a glimpse of
what to see today.
Sitting as still as
married to a deep knowledge of chess
remembering a man as beautiful
playing under a nameless tree.
Arbor Vitae to stop the play of mind
desire implies being seen by someone else
making do with mirrors
Diana as the object of Actaeon's imagination
an operation of ocular possession
which is culminated instead
by staying indoors

and letting it blow over.
Veils necessary for voyeurism
what anchoring an unnamed green
left by the fall of pale blooms
ringing the stones of the state.
The branches he couldn't possess
kingly undoing in a vision
enveloped by anomalies
women with beards
chaste uncoupled things
seen or unseen by groundlings
lineage patronizing authorship
telling her to do it
which cost her her sons
the eternal daughter swaddled up.

DUCHAMPS IN THE GARDEN

1. Astilbe between pink and white,
someone's idea of flesh-colored.
"Note: Astilbes are sometimes called Spirea in old books."

No critical language yet
stumped by beauty, even pale, even repeated—
everything's beautiful if the gesture's often enough—heather
    rising in
mounds, in lavender variation—
lilac, rose, recitation.

"Our only idea, in the proper sense of the term, is Criticism."

2. Heartsick and maundering, kick stones in the road,
counterpoise the stone garden at Ryoanji
and my son's other name.

In the throes of middleschmetz and morning sickness,
mumble words of another tongue.
How few some need.

How may stone walls built by the neighbor's father who
shored up the cemetery for the sake of Readsboro
his fame rounding the hillside
framing the headstones of the dead.

In the dream by the seawall
my father tells what he had hoped to make,
washes over the proposals of my son's father,
the sea repeating itself as if it were beautiful,
saying, you are beautiful,
before he was born, you are beautiful,
in the middle of a lake with a father,
estranged.

3. Knocked by winds the morning glories lie
wound about a stick pouring color out on the ground,
resting from purple birth.

"The resemblance between stones is natural and involuntary;
between manufactured objects it is artificial and deliberate."

Ordinary round stones, unsigned.

Irony balks at the gate. Refuses to enter the landscape.

By the seawall across the street from a well-lit dream,
I hear her say, come here it is your fault,
all you do is refuse as if it were a fugue—
the sea brighter than the windows, the sky pure Toledo.

To undress the stone bridge.
What idea in the color of skin.

In a world impoverished of ideas, her rose.
Criticism as round and pat as a patio stone.

CUSI MASUDA

[from a letter to Clayton & Caryl
Eshleman, March 6, 1989]

These works are done under title "Eternal Performance." Since first one in 1975 to 1982 in USA. These works are supposed to be continued. These are the continuous performance like my body existence continues to live.

These spaces were destroyed in each performance. I should tell little my background of my life, so you may see or feel more my work.

I was born 1944 in Japan near Tokyo 100 miles away. When Japan is in chaos in war. Whole things are abandoned. I lost father, sister, brother, 3 of 6 in family. After war mother almost dying by tuberculosis. We wander to survive in Japan to find food, space to live, after war.

Fortunately We survived. I moved USA 1971.
I feel human being is like.
where my birth come from. Where I wander and Where I go.
What surrounding with: what's wall, what's air.
what is Light. what's body existence. what is space. what is object to feel. what's human being
But, I know my body exist with nothing sure I feel.

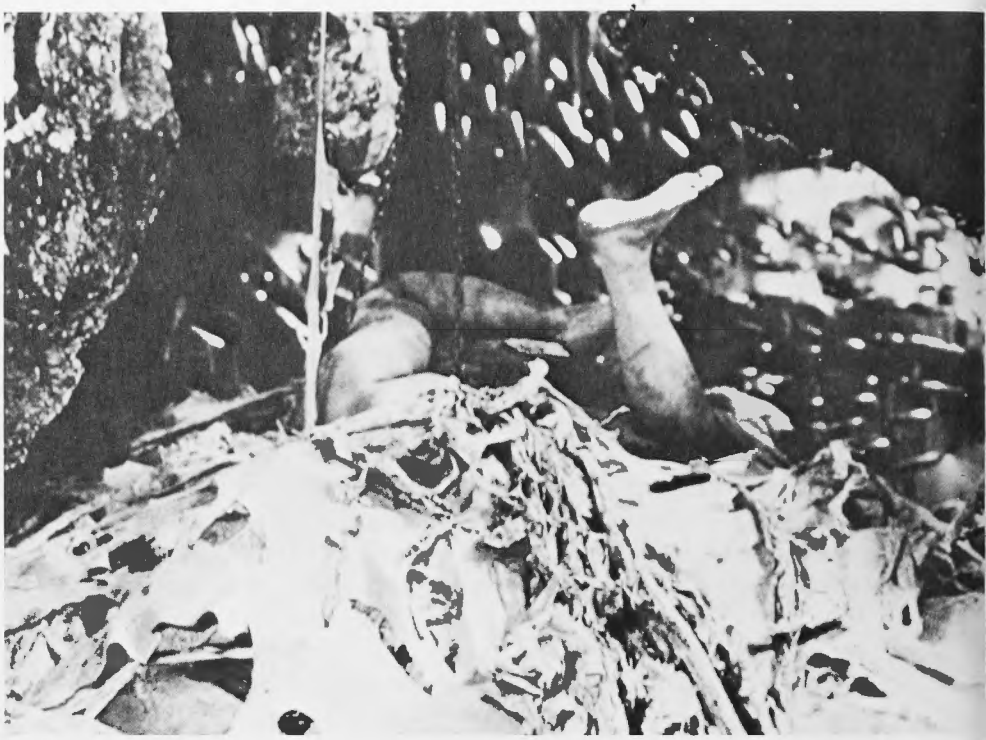
A NOTE ON CUSI MASUDA BY LEON GOLUB

A cycle of seemingly endless struggle, and existential agon, symbolic journeys of birth and death, the lone hero against all odds, these are mythical symbolizations of man's fatality and in one form or another, have appeared in many artist's work. But nobody has ever done it like Cusi Masuda. In huge solidly constructed structures intricately built over many months, Masuda plays out his extreme actions as he ferociously over a period of days destroys the construction even as he ritualistically enters and engages the piece. Nude, one half of his head shaven, in virtual perpetual motion, he wields hatchet or ax against the obdurant material. The force of his effort, his total absorption in the task, his intimate interaction with the piece, is remarkable. He may attack and destroy the piece but in the process he becomes poised and often suspended against the work almost like the protective mimicry of insects in nature. These words are a poor substitute for the event and even photographs or film cannot truly document the sensory force and stressed action of the work.

6/14/8

CUSI MASUDA

from THE ALLAH BEAN GALLERY PERFORMANCE, 1981



ROBERT MARTEAU

THE UNIVERSAL EROS OF THE ALCHEMISTS

(Tr. from the French by A.C. Goodson)

No one has a right to speak of alchemy who has not verified his word by the fire of the laboratory. Pray, work and keep silence: such is the rule observed by those called by the art. No wonder the adept of La Rochelle entitled his treatise *The Mute Book*. No alchemical tract has ever been written to supply information; the idea is to assure the transmission of the secret and to signal the way concealed again and again by tricks of language. *Visitabis interiora terrae, rectificando invenies occultom lapidem.* You will visit the interior of the earth, rectifying [your way] you will find the philosopher's stone. The visit, the journey, the descent to hell, to lower strata lodging the peat of the Great Work, no one can accomplish it by his own resources, as particle and particularity in the double spiral where the multiple phases of matter are inscribed. Which is to say that in alchemy the individual cannot be debased to a social vessel of any sort, he is confirmed rather as unique, irreducible, irreplaceable, immortal. For this reason, alchemy has always considered itself a royal or sacerdotal art. It has no history, its history being that of life, of death, of the resurrection of the universe in each man; it has no dogma, but transmits through the story it tells that knowledge of the world which can only be grasped by sustained attention to the mirror in which nature moves. A musical science, alchemy is concerned with restoring harmony where dissonance intrudes; it works spiritually at the heart of matter. It is mistaken to imagine that a spiritual alchemy might develop in tandem with a functional chemistry. Alchemy is either functional or it does not exist. Action is its mode of operation: the adept accomplishes the spiritual cycle of matter by receiving the *Donum Dei,* philosopher's stone, panacea. As Horace, the Latin poet, would have said, 'Give me matter. . .' It is this primordial matter, lowly peat, which the alchemist will confront

first in his quest. Where is it hidden? In the features of the black Virgin whose effigy is preserved in many cathedral crypts, the virgin still called Our Lady of the Underworld and *Virgo Paritura;* behind the ass's hide with which she conceals her perpetual and unsurpassed beauty; in the rags of Cinderella; in the sleep which envelops Sleeping Beauty. It is an infinite emblem in which the Virgin, our Lady, the Princess, the Queen are revealed, unveiled and veiled again, immutable Isis the mother of metamorphosis, the Queen of Sheba sparkling with the lover. The alchemist will put it bluntly that the work, as a work of nature, requires a female and that this female will mate with a male after a salt has united them in marriage. Which is to say that the artist in the course of this phase proceeds to the junction of what was divided when the Principle (indivisible nonetheless) was manifest in that double nature which China designates as Yang (male) and Yin (female), enclosed in the circle T'ai ki, a visible unity, universe born of the invisible Tao. Evidently, the success of the nuptials, the completion of the marriage, depends on the wisdom of the alchemist in his choice, in the laboratory, of the couple, of substances appropriate for the solicitations and reiterations of the operative, who is in no way outside the operation, who acts rather as the conduit of the universal eros through which the secret fire buried in the humus is revived. So at the end of winter the prince of spring, the finder, directs his song once more towards the elemental space enclosing the feminine nature which he covets, and she, hearing him, is scorched by the love by which she will bear the name of the Lady. It is at this time, Eastertide, as the warrior Bertrand de Born sang, at this time of the Ram, that the alchemist sets off before dawn in quest of the dew of heaven deposited on the grasses of the fields, the mist of starry coals collecting in a mirror, dew the annunciatrix of the philosopher's rose, of the pearl in the shell like the one Vermeer fixed on the lobe of an attentive young ear after Botticelli had disclosed it in the divine flesh of Venus. The fable circulating from one end to the other of the ovoid and spiralled world, this fable so denigrated by an age which in the name of realism, of formalism and of theory, not only turns its back on reality, but would engulf everything in its own death, this endlessly uninterrupted fable is irrigated by real life, the original, and it weaves truly the lively and moving text of the alchemists, for

what kind of science would lock itself up in impenetrable tomes? To be sure, the treatises of the adepts are necessary when obscurantism affects the race of men, herding it, massing it, making it deaf to its own fountain of youth. These cabalistic treatises save the word from the abyss, and the call of lovers over the mountains from turning into a lugubrious dirty joke: a joke pushing that 'morality' where various forms of puritanism have their seat, their bank account, their right-thinking, exterminating revolution. What many a religion, as institution, has separated in the course of the few ages we know, the Kabbalah, the Tradition, Alchemy affirm as whole. These do not admit discrimination within the adolescent game of eros figured so well by the angelic Cupid armed with his bow and arrow. His work the adept will name *ludus puerorum,* child's play, indicating its innocence, its harmlessness, emphasizing that all art consists in imitating in its act-non-act the Principle for which the generation of the universe and of the worlds is a game, pursued in all degrees of nature and in different domains without loss of continuity, a game nonetheless in which man and woman are, on our tiny planet, the major inheritors since the Word has made mythic animals of them, immersed in the babbling Babel of the fable, wholly preoccupied with playing at arrows and shot, love and death. That is the story of the homeric poem and of the flowering of the temples, of sonorities and of something weightier. Now it is to the humblest matter that the alchemist addresses himself, where the slowed vibrations are more compact, awakening him to the secret fire in the dark, the buried germ, the slumbering serpent, sulfur, and by the art of music causing a stirring of matter to all appearances dead. Yet the adept is fond of saying of his operations that they are women's work; this we understand by global convention, so that the hieroglyph might lead us to it, might figure it forth. These works are of Eve in the Garden, of Mary at Bethlehem, of Atalante fleeing, of the Hesperides with the Golden Apples, of the Rape of Helen, of Lady with the Unicorn, of Io, Isolde, Isis, of Vermeer's lacemaker, of Douanier Rousseau's snakecharmer, works of bed, copulation, ovulation, germination, gestation, weaving, washing, hatching, and all needs dear to the characters set out by the Benedictine monk and alchemist of Maillezais, François Rabelais, who vanished without a tomb, without a trace of his passing. The quest of

materia prima gave rise to many aberrations, orgies and magic which have nothing to do with mastery of the art. It takes a perfect void for the prayer-practitioner to gather the salt dissolved in the universal Ocean, where everything is lost and created in course of the coatlic coitus figured by Quetzalcoatl, the bird-serpent, itself an image, like the caduceus of Hermes, the rape of Ganymede, of the fixation of the volatile and of the volatility of what is fixed. Perpetual nuptials, the battling warriors unleashed by them: the knight-alchemist perpetrates them in that repellent black matter lodged beneath Golgotha; he transmutes it into crystal by the cross of the crucible, concave cone, not without inclining to the conchshell of Venus, symbol, sign, vessel of his divinity of universal love, who received from Paris the golden apple in exchange for Helen, born of Hel (God), *Donum Dei,* daughter of Leda, herself the moist hidden peat, vase of nature, egg where the sperm of the white swan Zeus was grown. We are not far from the mystery of the incarnation as described by the evangelists. Like the robe of Christ and like the universe, the fable is rough-hewn because it is the saying of that universal reality from which the alchemist reproduces in a short time the perpetual spiral, sometimes picking gold in the garden where dragons stand watch, perpetual pilgrim on the road shown by the star, Don Quixote in the swindling inns which cheat the castle, enduring injury and chastity for that slimy Lady of Toboso, and of Tabor, who calls to him from her mute mutability, to the divine void of the fool of La Mancha in the deathless words:

I am black but beautiful.

No song more live and present to irreducible eros, combustible but not to be consumed, phoenix which scorches and is born again from the center to the bounds. This is the salt, the somersault, salvation by which matter is exalted to its internal fire for reconquering the scales which angels descend, for they are of the same substance as animals, plants and ore, and the alchemist too, like the lover of Verona, employs a ladder to get down to the ore and up to the sky. The involuted spiral where spirit materializes is also the evolving spiral where matter is made spirit, the two simultaneous movements figured by the double serpent of the caduceus surmounted by wings, sign of accomplishment, emblem of mercury made over as ruby, or the red stone. Contemplating the

world in the mirror of nature, the alchemist prepares himself to correct the image and perform his work: the viperish hidden fire which he awakens so that it might grow ripe and pluck the apple in the treetop, gift of God who receives the now manifest couple, promise ever renewed at the heart of matter animated by the amorous logos. Caballero of the chivalrous cabal, the alchemist is very much the righter of wrongs described by Cervantes, the straightener of what is twisted, reverser of what is reversed in the mirrors; his word plumbs the origin where he gathers his matter, and by the art of music, in the course of an opera at once gigantic and minuscule, he turns conflict to nuptials. The alchemist is the ποιὴτὴς ἑροτικος, the potter whose loving art makes the peat shine bright, the poet of whom the poets sing the terrestrial and celestial works. In his preface to *L'erotique de l'alchimie* of Elie-Charles Flamand, the alchemist Eugene Canseliet observes:

> A sort of mineral ontogenesis, the Great Work is based entirely on repeated copulation, since fertility is arduous. The Adept Alexandre Sethon, called the *Cosmopolite,* wrote that it was only *after having mated eleven times* that the male emits the seed, that he is *debilitated almost to death* and that the woman conceives and begets a son fairer than himself.
>
> It is true that the process is facilitated by attraction, the wiles of the young wife, her manner of consent, the coquetry and seduction of her charms.
>
> The various themes of these preliminaries were exploited in writing and drawing with talent and even genius—the more so when poetry was involved, a sovereign mistress, better suited, paradoxically, to expressing positive speculations and abstract realizations.
>
> Morality aside, brother couples with sister in the sensuality of the flesh; Orpheus attaches himself to Eurydice and Gabritius seeks out Beya, as *L'Auteur incertain du livre d'art chimique* saw depicted in a fabric of exceptional quality:

Naked virgin, young in years, ivory hair, dark eyes, cheeks of white and vermilion, breasts swollen with milk, perfectly round and shapely. And this virgin had the striking pallor of a body so extraordinary. . .that she might have been thought worthy of the bed of the king.

The mother too will not be free of the incest which philosophers explain by reference to the customs of Antiquity, and especially to the myth of Oedipus and Jocasta. For them the mother—*mater*—is the *matter*—maria—as well as the wisdom hewing close to God at the recommencement of the world. She was figured among the masons (francs-maçons) at the center of the flaming star by the letter G, of which Fulcanelli declares, in his *Demeures philosophales,* that it is the *initial of the common name of the subject of the sages.* It is worth noting that the letter G is both the beginning and the end of the physical Great Work, that it comes between Alpha and Omega, that it separates A and O, to be added to the Latin VIR in order to form the untranslatable word VIRAGO which the ancient translations rendered (doing their best) as hommesse (woman resembling a man): *she shall be called Virago, because she was taken out of Man* (Genesis II. 23).

With this word, which assumed its perjorative sense only in modern literature, Ovid twice described Minerva, in his *Metamorphoses.* Of the virgin goddess, in unhappy competition with Arachne, the poet tells us '. . .The blond virago suffered her success, and tore the ornate web of divine adulteries.' Mythology is full of these adventures, at first glance reprehensible, and alchemy draws on them for the expression of eternal Truth contained in its whole *art d'amour.*

Starting with the G g or γ (gamma), we see how vase, vagina, grail constitute a vocalic set and for example how γονή (generation) is not far from γόνυ (genou/knee), the part which Lady Guinevere discovers in her lover, Lancelot, only after many trials, a discovery which, in the rite, only just precedes the ultimate gift, the knee

offered by the *virgo* to the white lance of the unicorn whose seed in this virgin's lap or in her crucible begets the χρυσίον, the christic crystal, salutary or saving gold. As for Oedipus with feet swollen from wandering, it goes without saying that as Prince he means to return to the Principle via hierogamic incest with the *materia prima,* Gaea, Gaia, Jocasta, Maia, and we have to live through the ends of these cycles, like the one we presently face, a period imprisoned in mental horizontality, in order to see what eros, which is to say love, might become in a reductive mentality, prey to its pathos and dejection.

PETER REDGROVE

from AN ALCHEMICAL JOURNAL

Prologue

Somehow I had summoned a grave presence of great strength and truth. Dressed in a shift she went to the cupboard and brought out bright cheese. The great table was scrubbed white, and first we ate. Then we loved, where she spread the great white bolsters. She scattered crumbs for the birds. Returning her kindness those birds ate her plums. Grave presence, in that shift among the fruit trees. Great strength and truth treading with bare feet among the waspish cavernous plums. She was cavernous, but not waspish. She and the soft earth swarmed with liquors which felt. Among the trees hanging with ripe fruit, leaf-caverns bloomed and squeezed. The earth was wool-soft between the ancient boulders. When I came over the hill, that first night, I had walked too far, I knew nobody, but I had this address, the wife of a former friend. I thought I had reached the sea, but it was the blue-grey slate roofs gleaming in the hollow. I knocked at the door, she was much smaller than I had expected, she had big hips and an impudent grin, long dark hair, a white shift. She said come in and poured me a glass of straw-colored wine. There was a big hearth with a fire burning on it, and the smell of timber and stone, like a well. There was a big white wood table, and a recess piled with bolsters and eiderdowns. I was in that house for twelve weeks. On the one side I remember that I was there, and I can still taste the wine and feel the shape of the glass I drank out of that first night. On the other side of things, I cannot tell more than the edge of what we did and what we saw, though I kept a journal, and through that journal I can, by reading carefully, remember all of this which darts and hides through the thickets of sensation, man-sense and woman-sense, offering, withholding. Those who have visited this house

already will know my journal; they will have picked it up off the white table and read it. Others will be led to the house, and find there what they should never have forgotten, journal or woman. Did I mention that the woman of the house is black?

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18. The door marked with the small male symbol, the weeny-phallus as a knocker. The three pale ladies, wearing their prime punk gear, their widow fringes, towering eyebrows and bow-tied lips, collyrium in zombie circles under their eyes, knock his rapper. He saw no enmity in these faces, picking up his half-pint light as a kitten; the mothercat is a friend who undertakes to domesticate his garden, the Japanese bushes, the marble-dump. But dog, heavy, full of its turds, wags its tail down to its gut; his full pint, heavy as a dog wags his tail, wags his tail in his gut, the hounds of beer hunt inside him, their barking explodes in his farting anus like the belling of coursing hounds.

19. To expand, it was her intention to expand the social body by wearing mutton sleeves on her blouse, the body which greets us from over the bar, its shelves of poetry-books with corks, the puffed sleeves and the cuffs six-eighths up to the elbow. Primed by these sleeves, she regards an insect in the bath, its plates heave, there a whole planetarium heaves, a whole botanical garden, I see her standing on the carpeted catwalk at Kew, blouse in full sail, all the trees drawing themselves up to their full height, puffing their chests; she the great and wonderful mutton-sleeved bush, a nymph errant among the normative sightseers.

20. The little horse in Killiow Gardens, her warmth glowed at me like coals, the chestnut glowed as I spoke to her, then she grew skittish and nearly knocked me down. I tuned into the glow from the pigs' flanks. In their orchard, their apple land of satisfaction, their grunts as round as fruit, their flanks built of opals, subterraining pigs, pork rooting under the apple, alas. The deserted dairy, with its dust of milk. The wagon-driver, on his celestial omnibus; as he named the trees, each stepped forward in its own perfume,

the perfume sat down among us as we rode in two rows facing each other, the horse badged with symbols of fertility, golden brasses of wheatsheaves. I said 'steady' to the horse, and it stayed.

23. Young men could learn the secrets of magic by celebrating the sacred marriage, which is masturbating in the presence of the goddess' statue and ejecting semen upon it. Their shape-shifting then follows the phases of the moon. They can become wolves by passing through a certain magic pool, which is between the hills. They hear the hiss of the serpent as they push through the night-time foliage, and as they open the star-doors on their radio-sets.

28. The women in boxy white hats, the sorcery powders and oils running in the drains, flung from the stalls by the indignant prophet stalking through, all sorcery gone underground into the earth, from which it will have to be refined yet again. Now I itched to read, as if I had only to blow the dust off the chiselled words. She came in her black suit, like a graphite star, the Mistress of the House of Books. I would have her in the organ loft while the six-teen-foot burdoun vibrated, in the space above the choir behind the false organ pipes where the natural wood boxes of deep notes were connected to their lung-machine like unvarnished coffins singing of the resurrection. The fish were rising to the rain. A woman singer was discussing their concert privately with the conductor, both unperturbed by the long stain of vaginal juice on the sheets in the unmade bed, from which they had just risen and which lay open like the book of the world. The thin answering rain like an echo rising from the flat rocks made of the drops shattered like fast-fruiting fountains.

32. The musicians all decently clad in Golly-cloth. A rotting figure in the cellos. An odor of hot silk from the shirt-fronts. In the churchyard, an awareness of all the dead holding their breath in expectation of the resurrection. The creepie-crawlies sidle off the bone and prepare to devise another figure elsewhere, of wings and sunshine, of eggs and insect dew. The quartet fiddling away

at the poolside, and the pulse of the waves there rocking the water in its square basin; the motion left in it by one boy doing a bump-jump; and on that motion many swimmers resting and listening to the music on their backs, the heads cushioned on the water, the throats relaxed into the entire stretch of the body, everyone aligned with the pages of water so that they can enter them without a splash, the music suddenly shut off and replaced by the bass hum of the green pool as you swim downwards into its tune with your eyes open. Wetting the head changes the mood, the glittering divers emerge, hair spiky like a different forest of aerials on the roof, the mind changed as by wireless.

34. This autumn I noticed the wasps eating a toad flattened by cars on the road, they were tearing away strips of leather. I noticed a dead mouse with its stringy fur and the wasps all over it like a magnificent yellow-black brocade, epaulettes, decorations, moving fruit. I saw them pinching crumbs out of a dog-turd, nipping up little blood-and-wood loaves off a butcher's gut-stained sawdusted floor. I was caught in our mother the rain, and still the wasps came weaving to taste and carry away lichen from the bark of the tree under which I sheltered. I thought they were a kind of electricity, attracted by charges. I wondered how they would bask in the presence of a whirling dynamo, painted in yellow and green. I thought they would mulct it of its grease, and touch down on the shining spinning shaft, electric wasp licking up the honey of machinery.

45. The pope made saints out of rich witches, but poor witches were burned. Convent witches were canonized also. Women. . .in whose drowsy minds the devil hath got a fine seat. An old woman with feet like unto a wheel of fire. Scatter the ashes; if they are all in one place she can rise again. The wheel-goddess of cyclic and deepening time, the maelstrom, the dancer of the fairy wheel, she who turns the year, the Ferris Wheel, the Fairies Wheel, the Celtic Star or Wheel of Arionrod, not the day of judgment but deepening judgment, not last judgment, not last illness but return to illness, return to health, not one person but thirteen, the outer coven re-

flecting the inner zodiac. A linen-goddess, a woman, a rider of the wheel, pre-Christian fairy folk whose souls were involved in Karmic cycles depicted in the dances.

48. In the afterlife a gardener goes on gardening, but he is not a gardener only, but a garden. The angel of all the roses brims over the garden wall. I heard the crunching of numberless feet along the radial paths. On the skyline he was nearly invisible in his blue clothes. And the drunken servant goes on descending, ascending the cellar steps sipping at the decanter, and the soul of the wine embraces him from the damp earth floors of the tuns. It is like the smell of a mother's early-morning arms. He sets the rose in motion; the other carries the warm red wine into the garden in a rose-stem glass and they both toast the angels. Their bodies give off a potion of scents like a herb-bed of flowers in a sudden shower of rain.

49. The ghost of a frock. The endless trains of the ghosts of toilet-paper. She uses her frock as toilet paper. A paper dress will do for a ghost. She grins, and I see the shit under and within. I see through her into the shit. Maggots prepare to gain wings and fly. When matters look this way there is no need to exclaim otherwise. These visions which are roused in the earth by the chafing of the sky. And the resurrections: the stones lie overturned as the forests do. The dead live in the trees until it is time to come forth. For every dead person there springs a tree. It is their home, an opulent one, a very opulent palace, this tree given by earth, air and rain. The green leaves cover the shit. A green papery dress. The forests seethe in the maggot.

50. Under the face of the Bat, life lived, the flittermouse whose face is a cross between a baby and a dog. Under the Bat, her shadow etched against the moon. The doctor sings the bat into his living-room, the singing doctor. Perfect love and perfect trust has grown between them. The bat exudes a little semen for the doctor's potions. The doctor takes the pulse of the bat before

waving him farewell. The doctor is a cross between a man and a serpent, and his alliance with the delicate membranous skinny creature is strong. He pours a glass of twelve hearth whisky for them both. Four fingers.

51. The higher the cloud the colder it is, and the louder the thunder, says the Smiling Host at his white portals; I have given you the attic. The walls were trembling, and as I entered, merely entered, the thunder gave a soft preliminary rumble outside in the broad windows where I saw the air-streams mixing lubriciously. It was not, as they used to say in my childhood, the clouds knocking together, not exactly that: it was the air-masses wrestling, whistling skin gliding over whistling skin, silk over silk, and silk over warm glass or over sulphur globes, as in the old electrical experiment, creating electricity and vast jumping sparks. This toil went on all over the world above our heads, and beneath our feet too, for the static charges of the earth moved under these influences in their rock reservoirs, as the sea under the wind. And we, the children? In my attic window, I was staring with wide eyes straight into the processes of the angels, and of the unconscious mind, the turmoils and beauties of the spiritual world, the respiration of the Goddess.

55. As she left us, the tension from the thundercloud grazing the land lessened. We lifted our glasses and took a drink. The two, man and woman, with their clothes slightly out of phase, the two differing human shapes, heterodyning. The pocket full of posies, the cave of flowers, the underground fairyland, the shades within the soil moving with the clouds. The rose sets the thunder in motion. Earth and sky moving together, arms linked. The child within, the secret sharer, knows the clouds in its astrodome, watches the dragonish shapes. She occupied the form of a woman. She was for that moment the thunder, behind the door with the skeleton door-knocker, the bones hold a sword in their left hand and wear a triangular skirt of silver. Her witch-name was Vesica. As I touch the fixed star of her clitoris, her body gives off a potion of scents like a herb-bed of flowers in a sudden shower

of rain. A woman like a big magnetic wave. A standing wave which keeps its shape but exchanges its substance with its surroundings continually. A strange shining taste in the air. The scent of the stone pines, like the moon's grove of the zodiac which she passes through at night.

58. Their faces could be seen for ever in the markings on the panther, or all-beast. The faces of the slain host are seen in the markings on the moon. They raised their priestly power by burning witches. The great cloud of blood and cannon smoke, the thunder clouds over battlefields like armies marching away, the cannon-rumble of thunder. The battle now is always there. The cloud radioactive with a noise like typewriters. The thundercloud sealing Falmouth in behind its hills. The planetarium above, the clouds float reduced in this vapour, the planets wheel in immense clouds over our heads. Were that leaden cloud to blow away you would see Saturn a few miles over our heads; in that sunset-vapour Mars; in that light rain Venus and in the feathers scudding in the rain-puddle, Mercury.

59. We go to bed in our outdoor clothes. So we can be shopping while we're sleeping. Or in our garden clothes. Then we can be growing and planting. In boiled shirt and puffed dress. Then we come dancing. In khaki gear so we can fight and make up after. In lamée underwear. To glitter like a pop group with dreams like videos. In labyrinth checks, to wander among the horses, the dressage schools, the rousing bets. We do not sleep in top hats. Or in welders' masks. Though football vests help us score. And cricket shirts to play the game. We do not use medals which scratch the chest like nails. Or in our shrouds, though lace and tapes delay us. Above all we do not use pyjamas. Or retire to sleep in nightdresses. All the world should feel relaxed as bed. That is enlightenment. But not pyjamas, above all. Not pyjamas.

61. Equivalent times tend to be proportional to the fourth root of body mass, so that time goes 10 times as fast for a 30 gram mouse

as for a 300 kilogram cow: lifespan, gestation period, protein turnover, breath duration, and pulse interval: the five vital airs. So the mouse fits as many breaths and heartbeats into its short life as the cow does into its long one. The broken water in the Roads that heralds the Vernal Equinox.

62. A magic Yule. The women and children are excited by their presents. Their pine-tree working with their perfume. As Santa passes from person to person giving out presents he takes up a sniff of perfume from one, and then the next, it adds up in his lungs to a total Christmas. Each one like a little scented ornament hung on the one total spirituous household tree. Hung like glowing stars on the pine-tree of my lungs. The Christmas tree the outer lungs. A good Xmas the right blending of smells: the father working so hard at the presents to get the right smell off his family; the mother blending in the kitchen the right smells so their juices rise, the parcels and presents, open them and you give off little squirts of envy-gas.

63. The women dressing like the weather and the seasons to bring the mind into accord with the climate, all the looms constructed in compliment to the weaver of the firmament. The planetarium of the skin, the stars rising across it and tracing their meridians. The slurry of mines, the shadow of landscapes. You look down the shaft of the ankh and see the great stone at the end, in the chamber beyond the cross-roads.

JOSE LEZAMA LIMA

CONFLUENCES

(Tr. from the Spanish
by James Irby)

I used to see the night as if something had fallen upon the earth, a descent. Its slowness kept me from comparing it with something descending a stair, for example. A tide upon another tide and so on, ceaselessly, until it came within reach of my feet. I would blend the falling of night with the sole expanse of the sea.

The headlights of the cars threw their beams in zigzags and the shouts of "who goes there?" began to be heard. The voices leapt from one sentry box to another. The night began to be populated, to feed and grow. From a distance, I could see it criss-crossed by ceaseless points of light. Subdivided, fragmented, riddled by the shouts and the lights. I was a long way off and could only sense the signs of its activity, like some secret parley behind closed doors in the night. Distant and voluble, mistress of its own hesitations, the night would penetrate into the room where I was sleeping and I could feel how it spread through my sleep. I would rest my head on a succession of waves that reached me with their elusively slight ripples. I could feel myself resting on smoke, on a cord, between two clouds. The night gave me the gift of another skin, it must have been the night's own skin. And I would turn about in that vast skin that stretched back, as I turned, to the mossy beginnings of time.

When I was a child, I would always wait for the coming of night with undeniable terror. Terror, for me, of course, was also the room that can't be opened, the trunk with a lost key, the mirror where someone else suddenly appears beside us, a form of temptation. It was never a provocation to adventure, or a fascination on the horizon. I never rode on the back of the night as it withdrew, nor did I have to reconstruct for my other period of sleep during the day the fragments of myself that the skin of the night had left scattered separately over my bed.

The enormous skin of the night would leave me with innumerable ways of sensing for innumerable ways of evidence. The dog who during the day had passed by me many times with my hardly noticing him, now, at night, lay beside me as if asleep, and then I stared at him with the most unwavering attention. I evidence the wrinkling of his skin, the way he moves his tail and paws trying to scare off non-existent flies. He barks in his sleep and bares his teeth angrily. In the night he has invisible enemies who still harass him. The angry reactions he had before do not now depend on anything homologous to his daytime motivations. At night he doesn't depend on motivations, but rather, unwittingly, he engenders innumerable motivations on the skin of the night that covers me.

The night has become reduced to a single point, which then grows until it becomes the night again. This reduction—which I evidence—is a hand. The placement of the hand in the night gives me a sequence of time. A time in which this can happen. The night was for me the territory where the hand could be recognized. I would say to myself: that hand can't be waiting for anything, it doesn't need any evidencing from me. And a weak voice, which must have been very far away from some small fox-like teeth, would say to me: reach out your hand and you'll see how the night and its unknown hand are there. Unknown because I could never see a body behind that other hand. Hesitant in my fear, and then inexplicably certain, I would slowly start putting out my hand, as if moving anxiously over a desert, until I found the other hand, that otherness. I would tell myself: this isn't a nightmare, go more slowly, because you may be hallucinating, but finally my hand would evidence the other hand. The conviction that it was there lessened my anguish, until my hand went back once more to being alone.

It is only now, almost half a century later, that I can clarify and even separate into different moments my nighttime quest for that other hand. My hand would fall upon it because it was waiting for me. If it hadn't been there, my failure, which would have meant another fear, of course, would have been greater than the fear engendered because the hand was there. One fear hidden inside another. Fear because the hand is there and possible fear that it might not be there.

Later, I learned that hand is also found in Rilke's *Notebooks,* and later still I learned it is found in almost all children, in almost all textbooks on child psychology.

So there already was the becoming and the archetype, life and literature, the river of Heraclitus and the unity of Parmenides. Take my hand away? Belittle my terrible experience because someone else had already suffered it too? Turn a decisive and terrible experience into a simple play of words, into literature? The time that went by taught me a solemn lesson: the conviction that what happens to us, happens to everyone. That experience of my hand upon the other hand will go on being extremely valuable, no matter whether all hands held out meet all the hands of the invisible.

It was such a decisive experience that, even though it may be found in child psychology, there are still nights with that other hand, the hand that appears. There will always be a night when the other hand comes and other nights when my hand remains rigid and unvisited.

I waited not only for the other hand, but also for the other word, the word that is always forming in us a continuum that for a few moments is created and then destroyed. A flower that forms another flower when a dragonfly comes to rest on it. To know that for a few moments something comes to complete us, and that by breathing more deeply we find a universal rhythm. A breathing in and breathing out that are a universal rhythm. Things hidden are things that complete us and make a plenitude in the length of their waves. The knowing that is not ours and the not knowing that is ours form for me true knowledge.

The word in the moments of its hypostasis, the complete body behind the word, the syllable, the wrinkling of someone's lips or the unexpected irregularity in someone's eyebrows. The residue left in each word by the vast dimensions of the stars became a momentary mirror. A fine sand that left letters, indications. A solitary word that became a prayer. Words were a hand excessive in its perspiration, an adjective was someone's profile or head-on look, eyes upon eyes, with the tension of a deer's perked up ears.

Every word was for me the innumerable presence of that fixity of the hand in the night. "It's time for a bath", "let's have lunch now", "off to bed", "someone's at the door" were for me like in-

scriptions that engendered ceaseless evaporations, unchanging and obsessive sketches for novels. They were larvae developing into metaphors in continuous chains, like a farewell and then another visit.

Waiting for the hand and having it come would start the verbal chain, or in that unending development the nighttime hand would be found. Sometimes waiting for the hand was fruitless and that would disproportionately separate one syllable from another, one word from its travelling companion. It was a momentary void because of the distance, which could engender things either in an anxious time of waiting or in the paradoxical emptiness of some good advice. It was like a move made in a game that fell, or I should say *collapsed,* upon some unknown board. A disturbing verbal move, because something advanced and then something in return offered a challenge and sent out its call over a net that brought up only one single fish eager to befriend all others.

In this way, I found in every word a germ that sprang from a union of the most distant stars with the most hidden things inside us, just as, at the end of time, the pause and expansion of each moment of our breathing will be occupied by an irreplaceable and unique word. In each word there will be a germ planted in the communicating vessels of the sentence, but in that world the verbal germ, as in the succession of visible and invisible spaces in breathing, produces the astonishment natural to man at a coordinate in time. The realm of the stars, that realm the Taoists called the silent sky, required the transmutations in man's deepest flesh, the fires of his innermost organs, his most secret inner changes, for the purposes of which the mysterious pineal eye perhaps existed, the extinct inner mirror reconstructed by the Greeks as "being," like the *moi haïssable* of Pascal, like the "unified self" of the Alexandrines, which later will attain its highest expression in Saint Augustine's *logos spermatikos,* the participation of each individual word in the universal word, a participation that includes a breathing that joins the visible and the invisible, a metamorphic digestion and a spermatic processional that changes the germ into a universal word, a complementary protoplasmatic hunger that engenders the participation of each and every word in an infinite, recognizable possibility.

But man not only germinates, he also elects. I would stress the similarity between these two phenomena, which are for me

equally mysterious, because when we elect we start a new germ, but, since this germ stands in a more direct relation to man, we will call it an "act." In the dimension of poetry, to carry out an act and to elect are like a prolongation of the germ, because that act and that election come within what is known as the tactile consciousness of the blind, though, even as I venture to call it that, I know I only slightly approximate what it is.

It is an act that takes place and an election that occurs in a ciphered form beyond nature, in supernature. The answer to a question that cannot be formulated, that floats in infinity. A ceaseless answer to the terrible question posed by the demiurge: why does it rain in the desert? Act and election that take place in supernature. Cities that man reaches and then cannot reconstruct. Cities slowly built over thousands of years and then struck down and levelled in the blink of an eye. Made and unmade with the rhythm of our breathing. Sometimes made by the sudden descent of the stars and other times made like a row of instantaneous columns rising out of the earth.

What is "supernature"? The penetration of the image into nature engenders supernature. In that dimension I never tire of repeating the words of Pascal, which were a revelation for me: "since true nature has been lost, everything can be nature"; the terrible affirmative force of those words made me decide to put the image in the place of the nature that has been lost. In that way, man replies to the determinism of nature with the total freedom of the image. And the pessimism of lost nature is answered with the invincible joy in man of the reconstructed image.

Do they live in some ruins? Are they actors on vacation? Is there a painter there? We are looking at Goya's painting *La gruta,* one of his best but one of his least considered. In the background, the purple sky and accumulated clouds of El Greco, contrasting with the calm flight of the doves. Covered by the tablecloth, or underneath the table, they hide so the pigeons will come closer. A coliseum in ruins, a deserted square, the collapsed wing of a convent. In front of that desolation they have set up a stall to sell food, where an apparition covered with a tablecloth pecked by the pigeons engenders expectation and humor. It is an unknown space and an errant time that have no place on earth. And yet, we walk in this here and elapse in this now, and we succeed in reconstructing an image. That is supernature.

Supernature is revealed not only by man's intervention in nature: man and nature both, each at their own risk, join together in supernature. Among the Tartars, dead children marry. On fine paper, drawings are made of the warriors who attend the wedding, the musicians, the family members bearing pitchers for the libations. All those present sign their names and the signatures are kept in well-guarded archives. Both families of the dead children try to keep each other company, living in the same neighborhood. They share their property and celebrate all ritual feasts together. Here we have life going on very actively around the dead and the dead children as a couple penetrating into life. This is a reply to what the morphologists of the Goethean school have claimed, that all species in becoming more perfect engender a new species, in the same way that nature, when enlarged by the image man provides, attains to the new realm of supernature.

In the mestabas of ancient Egypt, a door was always left open to receive the magnetic winds of the desert. Genetic winds that the dead continue to receive. The penetration of the pyramids northward into the parched lands caused the queen's chamber to be constructed with the most favorable orientation possible for receiving the magnetic winds of the genesial desert. Hence my belief that the construction of the pyramids was meant to create not only a lasting space for the dead but also a genesial chamber for the kings to procreate with the concurrence of the magnetic winds of the desert. In this way a true lineage of both dead and living kings was attained. One after another the pyramids advanced into the parched lands, into the region of the dead, just as the humus, the muddy lands, were inhabited by the living, and so, at the very edge of death, the genesial chamber of the queen received the plenitude of the magnetic winds, to which Baudelaire's elastic phantoms, the cats considered godlike by Egyptian culture, are so sensitive.

For the Egyptians, the only talking animal was the cat, who could speak the word "like" that could join together the two magnetic ends of its whiskers. These two magnetic points, infinitely relatable to one another, lie at the basis of all metaphorical analogies. It is a genesial, copulative relatedness. Join together the magnetic points of a hedgehog with those of a shepherd's pouch, an example we are very fond of, and a chestnut is engendered.

The magnetic "like" also awakens new species and the realm of supernature.

Supernature has little to do with the *proton pseudos,* the poetic lie of the Greeks, since supernature never loses the primordial substance from which it comes, because it joins the one to the non-dual one, and since man is image, participates in the world as such and in the end encounters a total clarification of the image. If the image were denied him then he would have no knowledge whatsoever of resurrection. The image is the unending complement to what we can only partly see and hear. Pascal's fearful *entredeux* can only be filled by the image.

Horror vacui is the fear of being left with no images at all, in times when the pessimistic combinational finitude of separate particles prevailed over the demiurge's spiraling movement to break away. In numerous medieval legends there are mirrors that do not reflect the image of a damaged or demoniacal body, because when the mirror does not speak, the devil sticks out his slimy tongue. That innate conviction in man of knowing that our key can open the door of another house, our sword can lead another army in the desert, our cards can play another game in another place. Everywhere there is the reminiscence of something unconditioned and unknown to us, a reminiscence engendered by a causality in what we can see, which we sense like a lost city we recognize anew. Actually, everything the image is based upon is hypertelic, goes beyond its finality, rejects that finality and offers the infinite surprise of what I have called "the ecstasy of participation in the homogeneous," a point, an image, ranging in space. It is a tree, a reminiscence, a conversation strengthening a river by tracing a line with our finger.

Germ, act and then potency. Possibility of act, act upon a point and point that resists. The point is an Argos, a lynx, and leaves its track among the stars. Its traces, endowed with an invisible phosphorescence, are lasting. In all this there is a finite possibility that potency interprets and develops. A man's act can reproduce a germ in nature, and make poetry permanent by a secret relationship between germ and act. It is a germ-act that man can accomplish and reproduce. The howling, penetrating unity of a hunt, a cry of exultation, the permanent response of an orchestra in time, the warriors in the shadow of the walls of Ilium, the

Grande Armée, what I have called the imaginary eras and also supernature—all these form by an interaction of germ, act and potency new and unknown germs, acts and potencies. Planting a germ or seed on earth also means planting it among the stars, and following the course of a river also means walking one's way through the clouds, just as in Chinese theater a certain movement of the legs signifies riding on horseback.

When potency is applied to a point or when it acts in space, it does so always in company with the imago, the deepest unity we can know between the realm of the stars and the earth. If potency were to act without the image, it would be only a self-destructive act having no participation, but every act, every potency, is an infinite growth, an overriding excess, in which the stars reinforce the earth. The image, in participating in the act, produces a momentary visibility, which, without the image as the only recourse available to man, would be an impenetrable excess. In that way, man takes over that excess, makes it come forth and reincorporates a new excess. All poiesis is an act of participation in that excess, a participation of man in the universal spirit, in the Holy Spirit, in the universal mother.

Man as germ points to that development in his surroundings, and a broad strong basic trunk equates it with a fervor for establishing foundations, though we will never know, looking only at nature, what causal series produce splendor or decay, nor at what moment the unconditioned will irresistibly penetrate into those causal series. In some Asian cities, when people move from life into death, the dead are not taken out through the door, but instead a wall is torn down, as if the dead were being prepared for a new order of causality. In other Asian cities, at the moment of cremation, drawings on paper made by friends, and jewels and food are also put into the flames, as if to provide protection and company during a voyage that is supposed to be into another space.

In a few chosen vessels, as they are called in the Bible, their development in life goes forward along with a prodigious anticipation of that other space. From the stark plains of Castille comes the foundation established by Saint Teresa as an oblique experience that is later reproduced in Marti, for whom the paradoxical germ of exile takes the place of the desert. After his imprisonment,

Marti must have felt a kind of rebirth in the image of resurrection, just as later, after his death, he comes forth again in our flesh. The desert and its new symbolic appearance in an exile become equivalent. Hence, in *Paradiso,* in order to prepare the way for his last encounter with Oppiano Licario, in order to attain to the new causality, to the Tibetan city, José Cemi has to go through all the occurrences and recurrences of the night. The placental descent of night, the balancing point of midnight, appear as variants of desert and exile. All the possibilities of the poetic system have been set in motion, so that Cemi can keep his appointment with Licario, the Icarus, the new attempter of the impossible.

In *Paradiso,* world outside time becomes equivalent to supernature, since time is also lost nature and the image is reconstructed as supernature. Liberation from time is the most unrelenting constant of supernature. Oppiano Licario wants to provoke that supernature. Thus he continues on its quest through ceaseless labyrinths. Chapter XII, negation of time: inside the glass urn the dead boy and the dead centurion ceaselessly exchange faces. But in Chapter XIV, at the end, the one who appears in the urn is Oppiano Licario himself. Negation of time achieved in sleep, where not only time but also space disappear. I move the enormity of an axe, I reach infinite velocities, I see the blind men in the markets at night talking about the pictorial qualities of strawberries, and finally the Roman soldiers playing dibstones in the ruins: I attain the tetractis, the number four, god. Chapter XIII attempts to show a *perpetuum mobile* in order to break free of spatial conditioning. The sheep's head turning on a pinion attains that freedom and in that dimension of Oppiano Licario, the dimension of supernature, the figures from a childhood past return. It is a cognitive infinity acquired in Licario's presence, but in a different Pythagorean rhythm: from the systaltic, violent rhythm of the passions, there has been a movement to the hesichastic rhythm of tranquility and contemplative wisdom.

Licario has set in motion the vast coordinates of his poetic system in preparation for his last encounter with Cemi. It was necessary for Cemi to have his last encounter with Licario's words. "The spider and the image in place of the body" says one of the statements he is given on the last night. Licario's sister Inaca Eco Licario appears and delivers that poetic statement as if it were a

promised land. The shadow, the double, is the one who delivers the offering. The double makes the first offering, delivers the first image and Cemi ascends the sacrificial stone in order to put into effect his patronymic meaning of "idol" or "image." Let us suppose a starry Pythagorean night in 1955. I have spent several hours listening to Johann Sebastian's *Art of the Fugue,* absorbed in the interweavings of the *fuga per canon.* Infinite relationships are attained in the spirals of the night. The constructions and dilations of the rhythm are repeated in each of our steps and we grow as we walk. We go down one of those streets that have swollen like the rivers of paradise. The lights of the funeral parlor shining in the night, without realizing it, have to startle and halt the person walking by. The repeated music of a merry-go-round sustains and hastens the person on a nighttime stroll. The house in its vertical dimension, like a demented tree, thrusts at us the temptation of its last terrace, where, under the protection of the priapic god Terminus, two buffoons are playing chess. Here there is something like the repetition of a circular movement. At the very edge of death, the coordinates of the poetic system thrash about desperately; with nature now exhausted, supernature subsists; with the earthly image now shattered, the unending stellar images begin. There, in the most unattainable distance, where the Pythagoreans located the soul of the stars.

The surprise is the house with its blinding lights, which the man interprets, while his saliva thickens and the circulations of his lymph and blood flow together. A *maestoso* and a *vivace* form a new unity which moves forward like a chessman into the invisible. In the merry-go-round there is also a circular repetition which breaks into spirals, into a shower of stars in the Babylonian night, into the comet that precedes and announces the death of Julius Caesar. A black cat of enormous size that goes from one crowd of people to another, as an announcement of death. The searching orange spheres in Van Gogh's night, cast like stones into the belly of the whale. It is the secret conversation at the entrance to Toledo in El Greco. It is the infinitely repeated music of the merry-go-round, between the blazing house of death and the infinite vertical polyhedron, where the image would like to set up its winter quarters. It is the indomitable urge to reach the Tibetan city of the stars, where man converses with the white buffalo, where vegetal shadows penetrate into our sleep. One day I

heard one of our *decimistas* say, as he turned an octosyllable: "the soul grows in the shade" *(el alma se da en la sombra)*. An intuition that concurs with a theologian who tells us that man has to feel like the plants, think like the angels and live like the animals. Perhaps, at the other end of the cord occupied by the angel, what we have is not the beast, but rather that happy coincidence of humanism's *otium cum dignitate* and the grazing of the beasts, both of which are manifestations of the Taoist's contemplation of the silent sky. The day we can establish a mutual clarification between human leisure and animal grazing, true nature will again be inhabited, because in both activities there is an expectation of the realm of the stars, of the world of infinite openness, for the complete relationship between animals and their surroundings has not yet been deeply understood and we are still ignorant of how the interrelationships of the universal word are established, but some day the world of *gnosis* and the world of *physis* will be univocal.

A surprise in the course of the seasons. Rain and more rain. When we go to bed, the cold linen offers its first rebuff, we have to press the pillow closer to our cheek to feel the delight of resting against something, a sensation like sailing into a resistance that can be overcome. Our sleep, as it continues, occupies new fragments of the night. Wool at night, slowly and secretly, comes to prevail over daytime linen, and the goat goes on dancing, but no longer in the sunbeam. All that is hidden, closed off, put away, opens its doors and offers the quiet new sumptuousness of a new marketplace. Cotton coins that make no metallic sound purchase magical fabrics. Shapeless forms that had been kept in the storehouse now move toward the four bonfires blazing at the four corners of the marketplace and turn into clusters of faces. All that is hidden and dark, as the new season arrives, takes on figure and shape, becomes the child who leaves his house every morning in Whitman's poem. And he comes back and tells his tale. And he gets lost and goes on with his tale: can you hear him?

In the big house on the army base, I used to watch the coming of winter. The kitchen, the dining room and the bedrooms became more subtle in their differences, their silences made a more inward sound, conversations turned more to whispers. My grandmother would visit us more often. Our preparations for her visits were very extensive and careful, it seemed as if she were coming

to spend the whole winter with us, but the day after she arrived, at breakfast we would hear her say: "I don't like to abandon my house on the Prado," using the word "abandon" the way a queen refers to a castle that has been abandoned or the way we refer to a neighbor who has abandoned her children. An abandonment and neglect grandmother found intolerable. She would spend a very happy day with us, but by late afternoon she was already getting ready to go back home. I would spend the rest of the day in the sadness of that farewell. I would wander much too slowly through every room in the house. I would linger as I went from the living room out to the backyard and see there, hung out for airing, the bedspreads that were going to inaugurate the winter. Somebody would come and start beating the dust out of the bedspreads with some long branches. And the dust flying up would turn into showers of sparks that enlarged or blotted out the faces that would come out of the fabric until the branches made them disappear. On misty winter days I liked to watch those faces that only my imago projected and that then faded away, sneezing from the dust.

Those faces I attempted to fix in a poem:

Golpea el pastor con su cayado
las más delgades telas,
después del inútil ruido del azoro,
otra llamada, que ya no está, nos viene.
Ese ruido, naciendo en otra puerta,
se deshace en las preguntas de una muerte.
Ruido de otro total se perderia,
si no fuese universal la carne de la tela.
Nadando en nuestro instante alguien viene
a brindar su cuello por regusto o sucesión
y aunque el cayado se aplaque por las venas,
saca, saca las caras de la tela.
El golpe no es el que corresponde a cada cara
y cada cara se pierde por la tela.

The shepherd knocks with his staff
the thinnest fabrics,
after the useless noise of the fright,

another call, not there any more, comes to us.
That noise, arising at another door,
dissolves into the questions of a death.
Noise of another total would be lost,
if the flesh of the fabric were not universal.
Swimming in our instant someone comes
to offer his neck in aftertaste or succession
and even though the staff is placated in the veins,
it brings, brings out the faces from the fabric.
The knock is not the one that corresponds to each face
and each face is lost in the fabric.

But the poem was also imparted by a kind of daring. Its title taken from esoteric Pythagorean thought and symbolic mathematics was pervaded by another adolescent innocence. The poem was accompanied by another memory, not the clouds of autumn, but the operations of algebra. Things hidden behind the full moon of the zero. A negative quantity coming to strengthen another growth in memory. In that winter fabric, behind those clouds of dust, there were chubby-faced angels or bony heads nodding and oozing tar and pitch. Remember that figures appearing in showers of sparks, billowing dust or clouds display obvious traces of pitch on their teeth, their finger tips or their ear lobes: are these perhaps the signs of their origin or derivation? Unknown affinities with the world of carbon and flames are betrayed at times, and this makes the figures recognizable, because of their blackheads or the dust left on them from their conversations with Maria la Luna.

Hidden in the minus zero, in the layers of dust, the faces kept on disappearing. When the branches began to beat the bedspreads, the signs would dig their nails into the negative quantities in order to hang on to a few faces, a few intersecting lines, until finally the fabric was alive with conversations, with afterdinner talk, with interchangeable faces. It seemed as if the masks were kept in huge wardrobes with three mirrors and came back from one season to another.

The house offered not only that expected metamorphosis, but also continuing hidden marvels. The colonel's study. Tables with maps and drawings, weapons hanging on the wall, diplomas, medals, armillary spheres, Mercator projections. That was located

on the other side of our parents' bedroom, beyond which we never went. The "beyond" was the study, where the colonel spent most of his afternoons and evenings. If we ever penetrated into that room, through some furtively opened door, we would then run away in fright, like someone who has entered an atmosphere that refracts him. We would go in slowly, looking at a corner or a shadow or a creaking piece of furniture, and then run out like arrows shot from a bow.

That room was also a gift from the course of the seasons. It would be opened up to the curiosity of the other inhabitants of the house in the muffled passage from summer to winter. There you could see a piece of black and green marble, comparative drawings of daggers from Florence and Berlin, an obsidian chess set with men as large as your hand. It would be opened up simply to be aired out, but for us it was a kind of magic spell, a challenge, something that invited us to commit some exceptional act and then withdraw in concealment. Those figures appearing in the changes of seasons, those fleeting sallies beyond what we ordinarily knew, occurred slowly, as if lingeringly and apart from any repetition. Insistence did not seem to be part of their nature. They were fleeting, barely glimpsed, shadowy, but how deeply they satisfied us, and now that we are separated from ourselves by the dusty sands of time, they seem as if they had been repeated over and over again, as if innumerable faces kept coming out of the fabrics, as if we had made whole sojourns out beyond the Pillars of Hercules.

From that room, library, storeroom, resting place for wayward things, I would later unravel the magic that I have sensed in all dwelling places of men, like the protectiveness of a snail that offers its defensive labyrinths to the assaults of the ocean's waves in the darkness of night.

It was the conviction that there, in the remoteness of what was right at hand, could be found all the sparks of an unseen forge. All the inhabitants of the house were asleep, but in that room that was unlike the others, we could perceive the difference with all the secret involutions of our being, there were movements so slow as to extend over thousands of years or centered on a wheel spinning with dizzying speed. There life took on indecipherable movements, remnants of some liturgy in a deserted forest or dense

filterings down into some underwater cave, but the sleepers would come holding their tiny seashells to listen to the stars and broad lecterns would allow the intoning of psalms.

The conviction that the dragon, what is there and not there, what appears and disappears, needs a place of protection out beyond the Pillars of Hercules, also had at its disposal the library as a supernature. There, in solitude one seeks company, and more specifically in public libraries, where company seeks solitude. The struggle against the dragon had to take place in the ceaseless relationships between solitude and company. From the memory of the mysterious room, out beyond the pillars, on the army base, would come my conception of Chinese culture: the library as dragon. Lao Tse, he of the sense of the creative that is uncreated, was a librarian, and Doctor Kung Tse, the Confucius of the Jesuits, spent the last fourteen years of his life working on the *I Ching,* the book of changes, of the visible and the invisible, where the dragon takes up lodging in a book to speak with the dead and trace the coordinates between the insignificant and the vast excess of the stars. And, just as we can make writing more legible with fire, so we can speak with the invisible.

In itself, the urge to bring to a book that which cannot be heard or see, the urge to have the uncreated that creates take on meaning, tells us that the struggle with the dragon has to be out beyond the pillars, that it will be in an imaginary era, that it will have its place in supernature. And just as it is claimed in some medieval legend that the devil likes to sleep in the shadow of the bell tower, so the uncreated that creates likes to spend the day in the library, because the library has begun by being something unheard, unseen, and thus nature will be found again in supernature.

We have also lost the living sense of things so decisive for man as a bonfire, a glass of water, a mirror or a sword, or as the alphabet, that safeguard to keep caravans from being lost in the desert. Along with the memory of the house, the river, the planted fields, the bull, in the alphabet we find the five letters that poetry provides. These are signs that cannot be deciphered, they must not be signs of reminiscences of figures, but symbols of the persistence of the secret challenge concentrated in an alphabet. This is the offering made by poetry, five unknown letters, wayward analogue

between the stars and the earth, of the cloud entering the mirror. These were the letters in the depths that leap out like fish when we drink water from our cupped hands.

I would look out into the backyard again and that distance between the limits of the house and the line of the horizon also became filled with unknown figures. The presence of hand upon hand in the middle of the night would change into a column of army mules going down into the woods, into the darkness. I would watch them and see how, with the most invincible resistance, they moved into a destiny they knew nothing about. They plodded their way through Fall and Redemption, enduring total sorrow. The closer I got to them, the more clearly I could see the trembling of their skin. They would sweat, tremble and plod, on and on. They knew nothing of their destiny, but they resisted. They went down into their Fall as into their Glory, and their resistance lighted the way for the passage of great transports. One might say that in reply to the punishment they receive they offer the punishment of their resistance. They move unknowingly out beyond the pillars, breathe like bellows in supernature and move the broad foundations of imaginary eras. Their distances are occupied by the ceaseless transformations of poetry. The resistance of the mule sows its seeds in the abyss, just as the duration of poetry sows its seeds by a resurgence in the stars. The one resists in its body, the other resists in time, and the incipient wings of each can be seen to seek their complements, unknown, known and again unknown.

Because of an unprecedented increase in collections of family photographs, I realized that I was moving from a blazing zenith, from the ways of the *splendor formae,* down into a deep darkness. When my mother died, her album of family pictures enlarged my collection. In hers the people most frequently depicted were those who had gone down into the shadows of Hades, whereas in mine it was my contemporaries, those who still enjoyed the realm of light. What I can now contemplate with apparent calm was for me then a very violent, desperate shock. It was as if old relationships, the most pathetic family stories, had become peopled anew, had come to the table after dinner and could quietly dialogue with us, without the slightest alarm on our part.

Amid all these dizzying trials, I found myself plunged into darkness. The more these pictures found their places in the

reaches of the past, the more they took on for me the dim glow of words read under a gas lamp. These portraits regained their serene joy, their sumptuous presence. They were real ghosts, tangibly existing in the image that provided them with bodies to walk about in, with voices that could be heard and with deeply moving farewells. The image they had abandoned like an egg embodied them anew. They lived in the palace with the green windows, went about the city with a hundred doors, came to hear mass in the Cathedral of Havana. That exquisite and most refined group of people, never complaining, never hurried, did not need any help from me to reach the house where the dragon was lodged. I am the spirit befuddled by those apparently confused emigrants, I am the one who listens, seeks and brings together again the cotton and the scent of vanilla, the wavering lamp and the ancestral yellow of the lace. There stands Andresito, the child prodigy, holding his violin: he was killed in an accident in a benefit held to collect funds for the cause of Cuban Independence. He was playing that night in the tuxedo his father often wore. He fell from the elevator and died and my grandfather died soon after of grief. And my grandmother, telling the story of it all, would end with a kind of antistrophe from some Greek tragedy: and why did it have to be my son? When I was a child I wanted to be that violinist, the one who would attain expression in exchange for a confrontation with the *fatum*. He was constantly configured in me, even across the distance of death. He was the absent one, gone with the best of the family into the darkness of Moira, taking up all our family *simpathos*, and I liked to hear my grandmother and my mother tell what his studies and the night he died were like. And the delicacy of my Aunt Queta, my father's sister, secretly in love with my Uncle Alberto, my mother's brother, who, beneath his exterior as the ne'er-do-well uncle that all families have, possessed the treasure of a style of conversation that I have always sought to have as the source of my own stories.

In 1880, my maternal grandfather, who was very Cuban and went into revolutionary exile years later, made a trip to Spain. Around the same time, my paternal grandfather, who was a Basque and very Spanish, made his trip to Cuba. Years after, both families entwined their destinies in such a way that whenever I have been called a *vasco criollo* I have always felt a special pride, but my true pride I need not even confess.

A few years before she died, my grandmother opened up a gigantic wardrobe that was located in the back room of her Prado house, and then my youthful years felt a great flood of memories rush over me. There were my grandfather's tuxedo, the one my Uncle Andresito died in, and the dresses that my grandmother had worn to all her daughters' weddings. There also was an enormous inkstand with an inkwell and some solid silver reindeers, and lying on top of the inkstand was an amber backscratcher of the kind often used in the 18th and 19th centuries. That innocent wave of recollections went into the second stanza of my poem "Oda a Julián del Casal," where, to suggest the title of one of Casal's own poems, I allude to the reindeer on the inkstand and an amber backscratcher. Sometimes I think with delight that on the day of farewells, that gigantic wardrobe will again open for me. We hear once more:

Déjenlo que acompañe sin hablar,
permítidle, blandamente, que se vuelva
hacia el frutero donde están los osos
con el plato de nieve, o el reno
de la escribanía, con su manilla de ambar.

Let him be with us and not speak,
allow him, softly, to turn
toward the fruit bowl where the bears are
with the plate of snow, or the reindeer
on the inkstand, with its amber backscratcher.

It was a prayer I was saying for Casal and for myself.

Inside that magic wardrobe, Uncle Andresito's violin, protected from the dust in its tightly closed case, displayed the silent veins in its wood. Streaks of amber, small tomb of jasper, tiny graceful citadel erected by Amphion. In those parades in my poem "Pensamientos en la Habana," where I don't want to choose my shoes in a store window, where I indicate that the scratch on the lute deciphers nothing, where I conjecture that the first flute was made from a stolen branch, suddenly there comes "the violin of ice shrouded in recollection" *(el violín de hielo amortajado en la reminiscencia),* which awakens the forest harmonium that ties

and unbraids the strands of memory. And it is the violin that seems to exhale the poem's final orchestration: "my soul is not in an ashtray" *(mi alma no está en un cenicero).*

An ancient legend of India reminds us there is a river whose tributaries cannot be known. In the end its flow becomes circular and begins to boil. A tremendous confusion can be seen as it sweeps along, things totally unlike and trivial coexist with jewel-like symmetries and harmonious love. This is the Puraná, carrying everything in its waters, always seeming to be in confusion, with no analogue or likeness possible. And yet this is the river that leads to the gates of Paradise. Amid the reflections of its waves pass in procession the potter's vestibule, the tree of coral, the chain of the tiger's eye, the celestial Ganges, the malachite terrace, the hell of the lances and the repose of the perfect man. A ceaseless contemplation of the river transmits its dualism, the adventure of the analogue and the couples who retire to their small islands. A tree before certain eyes, a tree of coral before the tiger's eye; the lances before the terrace, and then the infernal lances before the paradisiacal terrace of malachite. Blessed are we the ephemeral who can contemplate movement as an image of eternity and follow intently the parabola of the arrow until it is buried beneath the line of the horizon.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

This memoir by the Cuban writer José Lezama Lima (1910–1976), originally a lecture he gave in Havana in July 1968 and later included in his book of essays *La cantidad hechizada* (Havana: UNEAC, 1970), is unique among his writings. Nowhere else does he trace so many connections between details in his always enigmatic poems and certain scenes from his early life, thus affording precious insight into the interworkings of memory, imagination, and text. The initial setting, more presupposed than explained, is the house on the military post where Lezama, the son of a Cuban army officer, spent part of his childhood. This setting he could assume his audience would recognize because it was so similar to the

surroundings given his alter ego José Cemi at the opening of his then recently published and already celebrated novel *Paradiso* (1966). Here that household, that family space, at first the lonely scene of childhood nighttime terrors, then becomes a succession of many spaces holding treasures to be gained, lost and regained. This is, in both the most literal and the most far-reaching figurative senses, an "economy": an *oikonomia,* a poetic system of equivalences and transformations rooted in the *oikos,* understanding *oikos* as dwelling place for both living and dead, who have commerce with one another. The speculations that follow upon the encounters with the disembodied hand, using terms such as "supernature," "image," and "imaginary era," can be illuminated by comparison with kindred statements in the 1964 interview with Lezama that I translated in *Sulfur* #24. Many things in "Confluencias" could and should be annotated. Here are a few more clarifications: on pp. 160–161, Lezama had read in a Spanish translation of *The Book of the Dead* that in ancient Egyptian the word for both "cat" and "like" (as in "this is like that") was *mau.* The metaphor likening the shepherd's pouch to a hedgehog harks back to Góngora's *Polifemo* ("Erizo es el zurrón, de la castaña . . ." etc.). On p. 161, "ecstasy of participation in the homogeneous" is the title of one of Lezama's "Ten Prose Poems" translated by me in *Sulfur* #3. On p. 165, *decimistas* are popular poets who orally improvise in *décimas,* ten-line octosyllabic stanzas. On pp. 166–167, the title of the poem quoted (in its entirety), a title Lezama hints at but does not give, is "Magnitud de catidades negativas." This poem is not found in any of his books of poetry, but only in one of his essays, "Exámenes," in *Analecta del reloj* (1953). On pp. 170, the evocation of the army mules was a source for Lezama's well-known poem "Rapsodia para el mulo" (1942), a translation of which can be found in Dudley Fitts' *Anthology of Contemporary Latin American Poetry.* On p. 172, Julián del Casal (1863–1893) was a *fin-de-siècle* Cuban poet and esthete, on the centenary of whose birth Lezama wrote the poem quoted here. "Pensamientos en la Habana" dates from 1944. Lezama's idiosyncratic use of foreign words and phrases (e.g. *simpathos* as a noun, instead of *sympatheia)* I leave unchanged.

TWO POEMS

O THIS IS A GOLDEN AGE

We're greener than you; we're our own amateur
(You're dwelling amongst dangerous polymers, harmed to your
fingers.) We're
Wonderfully made; we are saving our bodies, albeit so
Holily slowly: the great migration of souls to our
Camoufleur—how surely we are moving, like mobile plants,
To gather incuriously under the overhead light
& we're waving our fringes! lined up behind lucent Christine,
such sage—
Green caryatides laurelled, unlaurelled.
The last one, she, chiton'd in gold; she is ill at ease; it is
I; I am undergoing metaphors and similes
Where pain's not caroled, where questions can no longer be
raised,
Where nothing can be hidden from a brain, not even love.
Last night I woke suddenly: an intellection of gold rain
That scoured my length with skeins of flashing wire
& the gilding stung fiercely.
The deeper imprint of light
Was the touch I had been waiting for, so I could live.
O is this a golden age. O this is a golden age.

"When you are famous for discourse that is stunning and filled
with small, ornamented traps,
You are naturally one of the invited: *Reception Following in the
Paleontology Museum.* Christ, why not the crypts, then?
—With the guests gaily arriving through subways and steam-
tunnels under the bride's father's city? And Christ, when
you are famous
To the third degree (for the third degree), travelling in these
celebrated circles and all, while daily translating
Prophetic parchments out of an urgent Ursprach to the Press for
serial publication
—*The Dead Sea Scrolls, Interpreted and Questioned*—why, I was
saying, does tonight's touching ceremony, a doomed
Mere-mortal fling, bring hauntingly to mind the oldest vows of
Natural Magic?

Well, rhetorical questions are already answered *in situ,* so
always they bring you back to your dear senses
For a dumb spell; thank God for that, except if you hunt
something queerer than love's numbskull
As your spooked heart's quarry, like the bride and groom we
saw this evening at St. George's.
Isn't couplehood (they seemed to be saying) the last grand
frontier, the bride a bright white
Pavilion of silk pitched madly alongside the altar, and the
marriage vow the provisional settlement
Of pioneers or naturalist-explorers of a bold, daft school? Isn't it
possible
To take gracious leave of your old scriptures and guidebooks, to
go paired, say,
As if into a fossil flat (but here I invent), leaving behind you a
picked trail you can take in your memory
—For there, looking back, you might know your own minds
and speak them, too,
Like the lovers this evening, sanely removing their rings, saying
'What do you take me for?'
Saying, 'I only know I do.'

And so they were married, still wondering. Christ, what have
you wondered with all your heart, I ask myself now,
Which history hasn't answered beforehand in some shape or
form
Left here as memento? If only all relics of what's past would
burn themselves up in our brilliant careers
Like rolled parchment falling to ash at a glance, or the fossil fuel
gunned in a car on the way
To a wedding or wedding reception, only then we'd made
ourselves empty and virgin terrain
To confront in our rear-view—a 'hero's' cleared path for original
queries!
But this would require exhausting one's life and is maybe too
much to ask of a body
Like it's maybe too much to ask of this one. *Christ,* when
younger I was severe and demanded everything of the
classical languages
And the natural sciences—a homecoming, most of all—until the
night I found myself dumb and widearmed,
Oddly grateful, and moving forward relentlessly as if down a
dark and sunken lover's lane
In ground originally traversed by highway, following a vague
'memento mori,' cryptic
Apparition of *The Beautiful Stranger* who wafted away before
me shapeless and formless as an odor or spook,
Finally finding myself here, tonight, at this gathering, and so full
of life: It's a party! Amidst the skeletons! Where I
circulate
Full of wonder—for these others are oracular guests, too;
makers of waves and news
And art and love and magic.

* * *

Entranced by the beautiful brain surgeon I sidle to stand by her
left breast
And ask a brief question: 'Isn't augury bunk?' but she's already
moved
To the next room, leaving some smoke rings and blank spot
haunted by perfume

—Or maybe it's specimen jars on the shelves emitting
preservative smells
—Or maybe it's old ghosts electing to float from my man's mind
out via the nostrils
Now we're back in a room that mirrors the room where they got
themselves trapped;
I mean, of course, home. I mean, years ago at my first
university,
Adventuring once through the network of cellars and tunnels (at
night) undermining
The north part of campus, I found, with its basement door,
strange!, disengaged,
The mysterious sealed sandstone museum flung freely open to
my investigation. Peradventure the quest
However always enchanting was never so palpable as then.
Never so flesh and blood
—Though what I found, entering solemnly in and climbing the
inner steps to the ground floor, was
A huge lit and stunning hall of mirroring windows, a mirroring
skylight,
And the great archive of ancient sea-mammal bones, each piece
Clustered, fit, and jointed into posed, articulated armatures
So each barred rib-bone was strung correct along the curved
straw of its missing nerve
From brain cavity to ass; I saw the hundred hundred filigree
dumb captives—floating, swimming, and curled—
Hung from hidden rigging over the mirror-polished marble floor.
Then heeding my way religious through the dangling drafty
beasts I heard, perhaps, a sound and so I fled.

* * *

—But back to tonight's affair. Facing myself in the glare from a
glass case of skulls I hear a voice
Cut through the chat and consort music. Startled, I hold myself
still; I hear
*'This Man Has Inner Vision. The Ancients Called It Cosmic
Consciousness'*
And turn quickly to find only smiling, snide Mnemonica, famous
for sex.

'Ah, I thought for a moment that yours was the voice of the old
gods,'
I say pleasantly enough. 'Gods not of the right mind
But of *these* (I gesture to the skulls) with news that once before
seemed inarticulate to me
Or maybe, then, I simply couldn't understand
The sense of it: so many ancient sentences. So sad.
But now I understand each beast's dead doze is but the pose
Of a real good question
Unwhorled from the base of the brain's stem—*very* base but yet
Like dreams, like all nocturnal knowing,
But spinelessly kept unexpressed—
And so let's talk about *you.* Love. . .and what's that devastating
scent you're wearing? *Ars*
Memoriae?—the unscrewed-open phial your lost son sipped
from, *once?*—sweet spirited vertebrate—
No, no reproach my dear; I'd wear such a spectre perfume too,
and just, I'd hope, as nervously; but *you*
Darling—dipping into the drink, I see, and why not?—you look
lovely, you look
Ravished tonight. Has it been done by mirrors?"

AARON SHURIN

INTO DISTANCES

I.

The sky: the sea with wings. There have been days I would stand gazing for hours in diversity. From these fragments, from causes, power, poverty, I belong to experience.

She labored down the path barefoot, the wind wrapped her body, shadowed by clustering blossoms and velvety sunshine. I remember her unhappy married life as more children arrived, taking hold of me on all sides in one spot of my will—"stomp me into the ground." I lied, she was never close to the wind. The fat flowers laughed. I was hardened and have no meaning.

We looked: sweeping down the approaching road it grew louder, rushed against the flat earth roaring. Smell and hear and see and feel everything! I listened to the voice and knew it sucked up all the air around us. Slowly I was learning shame and secrecy, forced joy behind the henhouse, slept off something wrong, shook me nameless and struck my body with perfection and disgust. His word was enough for me, though I knew he'd never be his word.

My grandmother when there is no moon. She possessed all and assumed control, milked the cows with the movements of a man, skimmed under her hands the dawn and carried pistons to bed at night. In private no man could look her in the eye; her thick hair would appear in the door: she walked immune. At my tears she would use it on me: "You're unornamented, girl!" That was long ago; I walk hand in hand with unloveliness that gave distinction to destruction. Anyone elaborated the story through my silence.

While the cold sky came driving down to the grass with dew, the men cut firewood, the women peeled and sliced. If you looked at

them you felt as if you'd worked yourself, who pass greeting over the hills, family honor under the cedar trees, torture their wives, show no resentment, work again, hard filled with labor our house smooth as night.

Now around through the crowd on the platform music. His silver buckle distinguished him, he knew all the songs, he was young and called for the dance. Everyone bowed, separated, flaming light in the center they met, flying around and drifting clouds. His side, her face, her hands, his bending shoulder. I climbed before me a sea of swinging figures, rushed me under the raised legs and skirts. And the calling!. . .all the good things. . .listening. . .I was so little!

The slaughtering smoking winter filled mounds. You threw in a handful of corn and you could eat into deep plates. Was my name Standing Farther, Cooler and Tougher, Virgin Whiteness, Bleeding Arrows? Was there a secret tale in my voice that continued at midnight when the stars were creeping, quarreling into my child life money terror, dog work, disobey, placed my hand where we were not; tears fell on it.

We went by covered wagon, reached a forest, and stopped. Under the sky I stood on the yielding earth, her eyes were black, transitoriness came and swept the hills into distances. She stood facing north and west and south. I must turn around again and carry down words. It has been years with ease and swiftness. They came soundlessly over the wheel of the sky.

If you want to run away don't tell stories. She turned swiftly and gazed at her standing there. She could not hide the eyes still young and flared open. I began to make up a story—that eventuality between me and the door—pushed by the sky and some wind carrying me on its back. I would say I was walking down the road and slipped into smooth clouds, long time. We all stood and melted together, there where that black speck was gone. . .

II.

The town was occupied—Strike!—bullets flying on our side of the river. The law restored the convicted back in the ground. In the

dark tunnels long hours dug and dragged it to the end of the month. I passed in a foreign tongue, ceaselessly preparing for another construction.

She kept her eyes on the edge of an excavation. I have seen that look in other eyes, in love with a terrible thing and submerged in another: I can show each night. The men mixed with clay—foul-mouthed and trusting—spent it in one night. She befriended the men, alone in the darkness humble before infinity. The lean one was one of these; the men exchanged glances; big to her and gleamed with smothered laughter. He called to me and I slipped in. We passed through a canyon, and you can have this horse I'm riding.

If you open a book you have to write in it. I fled beyond the bitter tracks we had made. The gleaming road leapt forward like water, moonlight ice with prairie grass and purple hills. Animals cried there, and stretched on stones. Beyond them mountains called the snows into crevices.

You passed empty houses—The Flats—coyotes left their hiding places. The saloon, the schoolhouse, the Company. Miners—boys!—eating and breeding; the next strike; hunger would not give credit. I heard the possessors deserve the world of knowledge. There was silence about her for miles, I remade her silence. She would turn without a word, would gather the hills, would follow the same tune unrolling in the wind. Once, I myself knew it, in one spot on the hard, packed earth.

She worked and buried her head at night, knew little of theory but turned loose her convictions upon them. Could she tear the petrified trees from the earth by their roots? It beat rhythmically, climbed the flight of stairs, and end of "education" and enemy of women, began to draw the veil of forgetfulness down over desire. I was my wind as I sit here with leaves about me. I wrote down my name in actions not suitable for position.

If they told a story I understand their purpose. Grave things drawn beyond their depths. As I wrote I recalled—a laborer can turn her hand—pushed upward, staring at it, connected, convicted. Words are nothing but words—then gradually they were streets. I

walked, there were trees flowing, earth against my body, face down in work and sleep. And those up there: his mouth and eyes, my mother with mud, the company store. She had come before me, a woman and a stranger, muscular arms and wilderness under the skin. The word subjects her to the circle to be pure and repeated. Words cannot erase experience.

The train was an entreaty, but did not buy a ticket to leave. I marched and searched their faces. The lines—their falling music—would not be ended. . .

III.

At night the wind from the mesa could reach and I rode safely. Mingling with wailing to demonstrate "learned something." Yes, they are a part of her blood, forming far from town the cold lightning across my doorway. I erased those dead songs from my tongue.

Springtime, up the fuzzy hills, the river higher, rushing each night in our ears. In the semi-darkness the shouting between us was already filled. I cried out, waded under, crept nearer, clung to mine. Lights were burning like an animal that has eaten. The swaying water sailing away, hung in the willow trees, sated; in the morning the world is gone. Today is shivering, those were my blood and bodies, far back from the dark mountains in the flood.

Listen and look intelligent—you have grammar and a few more things, cook their food, wash bed, made skirts in her big-veined hands—a short distance from the rock rim for hours. Names and addresses contained patterns; from this short list I chose these working shoulders.

Ah!—house!—drive me over the hills tomorrow! One day my mother was sick and I must go home. Up the canyon road the scrub oak pulling at the frozen ground—only thinking, feeling nothing—separate units exhausted distances, down the lashing road must be coaxed a faltering child. I stumbled the steps, beyond the windows shattered into bits. . .three days and nights would awaken me. . .tiny eyes in the next room. . .clasped her

unfamiliar hand. . .I would not give it nourishment. That morning was there. In my arms she tore back her yearning and pulled me to my feet. Speech contracted in circles, and I understand nothing except this thing.

Turning away her face from us stood watching that kicking baby. We began in a station and met swept clean across the plains. She followed her silence in every direction, calling down the wind and the rain accusingly. Her eyes swooped upon its prey: I did not weep.

She grew stronger, tightly about me, my body between them. Tangled in the folds and had laughed herself into solemnity. To me her living in the same way made theirs—more rights over body and soul—pledged by such things to self-respect and conviction. We would go there—my voice continued—into a world.

A woman arrived in town with palm trees on the shore. The network of light—of tracks—regarded her with surprise. "Is there a train due here?" "You're too early," and vanished from her face. Hunger wondered if she could stand on her feet; every word uttered about her sought its way to food. She went away ethereal and almost pleasant. The wind in the tree far back recorded the floor.

Now long afterward my legs trembled when I stood. We talked of that intellectual world where waves of thought sweep for the depths, of work and nearly starved, of resentment downstairs, traveled farther, weeping women, the eastern sky passing the dawn through material things. In a canyon, flowing by my bones, the river cooled.

The trail had guarded these rugged hills, black, stony, frying. Her head touched the ground in greeting, where the trees began to grow again. Into an arroyo and came up on the other side. At dusk the giant cacti, arms against the sky. Where the wind haunting the mountain captured her penetrated friendship. In the center, the string around, she was crossing over, changing places; the peculiar fierce movements of her body beneath me tore through the air. Neck to neck, the wind sweeping her hair back, lathering,

rearing and whirling; through her muscles and her lips I received the quivering water.

IV.

Slowly the train came toward me, I heard her teasing voice. My face, my eyes, my skin and hair, moved forward. "I made them," then I turned and watched her. Voices here and there, heavy sleep, across the darkness we lay there, "this life couldn't stand you," or "I couldn't stand this life." I used to be strong. . .going to get work. . .died away uncovered and lay staring through the window. The watching stars seemed good or bad. Far up in a slumber a figure endured experience.

They told me what they believed, now you tell me who did that. The rich are interested in prostitution; let any man judge my nobody body. In my work her head blossoms and bent, a woman actively doing something. Dark and silent were the mansions who live and sleep in peace and luxury—they dug him out and his mouth was filled with mud. Belief and reason went again to the circle.

Little dried up dances could reply to such arguments. I have learned and become a force, and the tea in my cup became cold. Before the sun comes up invaders mingled their customs. Their fragrance came to me with the shadow of purple skies, and the slender forefinger traveling across the page. I shall remember the past, perhaps the present, but the future dissected everything.

It has no fear, no money. Our heads were spreading, a touch of wistfulness in it. It comes back, as if I were a part of the air. Talk to me, I was a raw, impulsive woman, and work was intense. Let affection make conviction the basis of your action. I am organizing and fighting for the wind.

JOHN YAU

ARCHIE RAND: THE FIGURE OF THE ARTIST

I.

In 1987, shortly before he began teaching in the summer session of a small college in upstate New York, Archie Rand conceived of a series of imaginative self-portraits based on Rainer Maria Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus,* 1923. After reading through various translations of the sonnets, Rand decided to focus on the second group, there are 29 of them, and set for himself the goal of completing an equal number of paintings during his eight week residency. He arrived at the school with 29 stretched canvases, each of which measured 62" x 38". Within a short time he had applied a monochrome ground to each canvas and completed a self-portrait. The self-portraits corresponded to one of three frontal views; large heads, seated figures, or standing figures. The styles ranged from painterly realism to expressionist.

These portraits became the starting point for an open-ended, improvisational response. While Rilke's poems suggested images and possibilities, it is fruitless to look for one-to-one correspondences between a particular sonnet and the painting numbered after it. Rather than seeing each sonnet as a goal (and the painting as an illustration), Rand used them as starting points.

II.

Rilke described his sonnet sequence, which he wrote during the first three weeks of February (1922), as a dictation he "endured and received." He wrote the 26 sonnets of the first sequence in less than four days, and then finished the Duino Elegies. The second group of sonnets came after the Elegies, and shift their focus from Orpheus to Vera Knoop and Eurydice, both of whom are dead and lost figures. Instead of trying to revitalize them, as Shelley does in *Adonais,* his Elegy to Keats, Rilke chose to dissolve himself as much as possible:

Wheels rolled past us, we stood and stared at the carriages;
houses surrounded us, solid but untrue—and none
of them ever knew us. *What* in that world was real?
II, 8

To all that is used-up, and to all the muffled and dumb
creatures in the world's full reserve, the unsayable sums,
joyfully add your*self,* and cancel the count.
II, 13

III.

The subject of Rand's "Rilke" paintings is the *Self.* By setting himself the task of completing 29 self-portraits within a limited amount of time, he transformed the eight weeks into a period of willingness (or willnessness) and self-consciousness. Rand would use Rilke's poems to discover and overcome his own limitations and habits of thought and action. The poems would function as a kind of mirror where he could begin to see both himself and his responses. Instead of trying to match the poems or compose a narrative, he elected to dissolve both his identity and any need to tell a story. Clearly, this formulation suggests that Rand believes that one of the ways to get beyond self-consciousness and one's habits and patterns of thought is to become a passive receiver through which the *Other* could speak. Naming is listening, and the artist acts as a copyist of internal impulses and discontinuous images. A kind of seismograph, he records whatever comes to mind.

Rand's goal is the realm of improvisation and metamorphosis. However, as someone who was born in 1949, he has defined improvisation very differently than the Abstract-Expressionists, particularly the ones known as the "action painters" (Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline, and Philip Guston). Whereas the older generation of artists wanted to discover essences and essentials, Rand wants to be a conduit or membrane through which any and all images can pass.

Consequently, if Mark Rothko's project was to continue purging references to the external world until he reached an irreducible light and presence, then Rand has deliberately gone in the opposite direction. He not only wants to put everything into a

painting, but he also wants to break down the distinctions separating high art from low culture, one thing from another. He is a self-portraitist who wants to discover all the selves that inhabit him, and to record all the traces of the Other that he remembers, imagines, encounters, and sees.

And yet, at the same time, Rand knows from the outset that his project is doomed to failure. One is severely limited in speaking for others, one is always circumscribed by one's own place—and often privilege—in history. In part, this may be why he chose Rilke's poems as both the framework and springboard for his project. It is a non-heroic gesture, a way of locating oneself in both history and society.

Rand heals the rupture separating art and life by looking for the Self in both. He defines the practice of painting as a public performance: it occurs in both the actual world and the realm of art. At the same time, art uses something else and cannot possibly measure up to it. In this regard, Rand's Rilke paintings are comparable to Picasso's reworking of Valasquez's *Las Meninas* and Jack Spicer's book *After Lorca*.

IV.

Rand's 29 Rilke paintings represent the artist's most recent investigation of a subject that has preoccupied his thinking and practice since he first hit his stride in the late 1960s. In the course of a career that has included painting large public murals based on Jewish themes, Rand has always attempted to let the *Other* speak. To name, of course, is to limit, circumscribe, and mark an identity. But to let the *Other(s)* name themselves is also to memorialize and remember. Rand places his paintings within the unstable world of memory and naming, imagination and discovery, metaphor and actuality, free association and metamorphosis.

Beginning in the early 1980s, he periodically depicted a single male figure. Looking back at these paintings now, it is possible to see them as imaginative self-portraits. In fact, Rand has repeatedly used the format of the imaginative self-portrait to investigate different ideas and beliefs regarding the deepest identity of the artist.

In *Painter,* 1981, for example, Rand depicted a robed figure holding a palette and brush. The figure's high forehead and hawk-like visage evokes Nadar's photographs of Charles Baudelaire.

Surrounded by paint, Rand's unfinished (unpainted) figure stands in profile, brushes in hand. The world is outside or beyond him. At the same time, there is a stand-off between the world outside and the world inside. The "painter" can be seen as either hemmed in and defined by the darkly painted ground or separated from the world by viscous paint.

The theme of identity is picked up in *Cigarette,* 1982. A seated man, dressed in a bathrobe, socks and garters, reads a newspaper, and holds a cigarette in a very unusual and affected manner. In depicting a self-absorbed man in an open bathrobe, Rand is able to reveal the way art history has affected our view of men and women, and vice versa. Is his particular pose, gesture, and manner of dress feminine or masculine? Instead of presenting us with a portrait of a man, each viewer is made to see *through* his or her self. The self becomes a window through which the viewer looks at the painting. Seeing is both a private and public act.

In *Sausage Painter,* for example, Rand focuses on the visual rhyme between a paint tube and a sausage. In the upper half of the painting, he depicts an artist who has been working on a painting of a sausage. He is facing the viewer and holding the paintbrush as if it is a baton. Either he has just completed his performance or he is about to start one. A woman walks by, carrying a pole full of what look like pretzels. In the lower half of the painting is a pastoral landscape with a road stretching back to the horizon. Along the bottom edge, in close-up, is the top of a crenellated castle wall mounted with egg-like spheres.

Over all of this Rand has drawn the thick black acrylic outline of a tube through which something is passing. The outline of the tube contains the artist, while the elongated outline of what is emerging from the tube contains the woman. The rhyme of the tube and the artist suggests a conduit. It also suggests the likelihood that Rand agrees with Norman O. Brown's assertion that all values are bodily values. While the paradigm of the artist as conduit inevitably evokes the figure of the seer or oracle, Rand undermines the seriousness of this figure with an incisive self-mocking humor. The painting is at once funny and enigmatic, perverse and disconcerting.

V.

For Rand, painting is a way, perhaps the only way he knows, of simultaneously destroying and reconstructing the Self. The point is not to arrive at either a solution or a style. In the Rilke paintings, for example, he tries to dissolve both identity and solution. Instead of looking for rhymes, as he did in some of his earlier paintings, Rand enters the unstable realm of free association and aleatory forces. In *XV, After Sonnets to Orpheus, 2*, 1987, Rand depicts a large head floating (or growing) from a tree, beneath which a glowing figure wields an axe. By making both the large head and tiny orange figure have equal importance, Rand offsets the larger figure's dominant presence. On one hand, Rand is able to portray a fluid world of relationships. On the other hand, the images exist in a kind of stand-off. In *I, After Sonnets to Orpheus, 2*, for example, each figure is literally and figuratively an island. The water is rising quickly, and will soon drown them. Right from the beginning of the series, Rand knew that the subject was both the Self and the leaving of Self.

ARCHIE RAND

SIX PAINTINGS

PAINTER, 1981

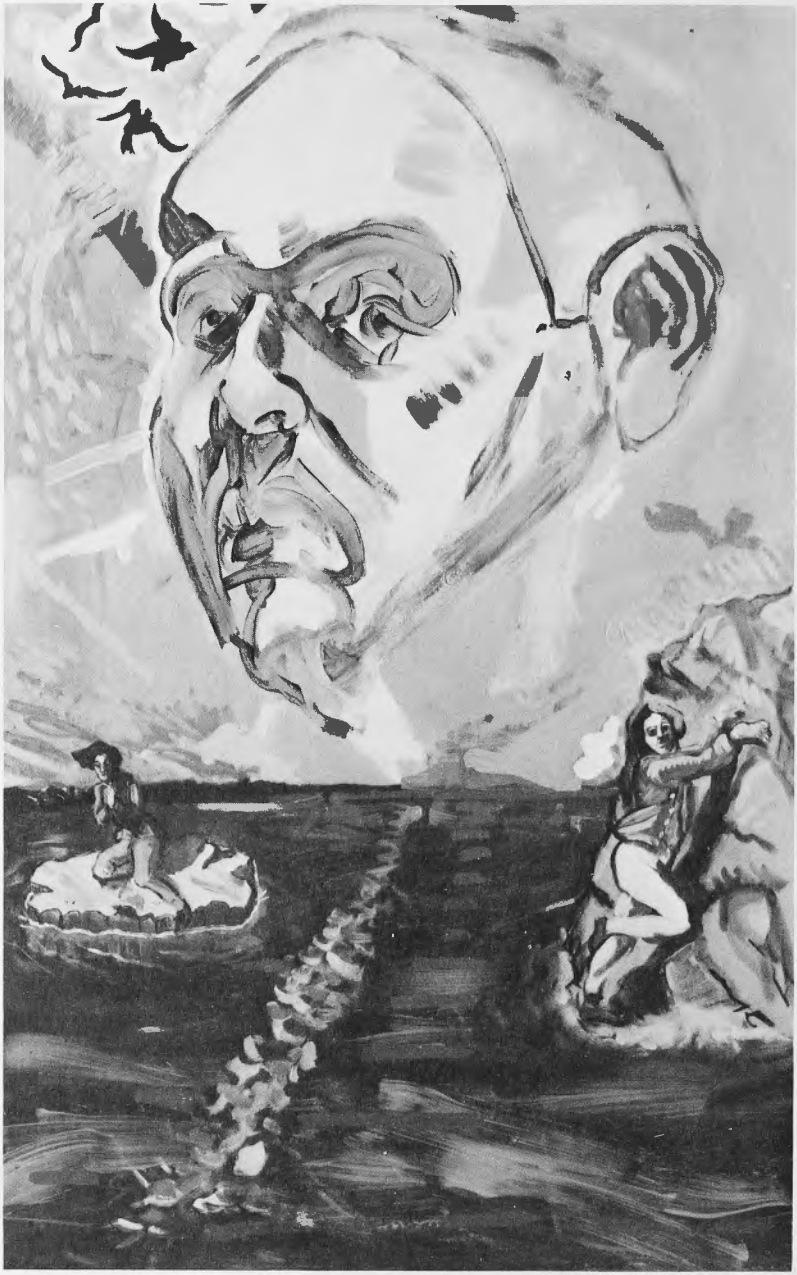
58" x 40", acrylic on canvas

CIGARETTE, 1982

70" x 58", acrylic on canvas

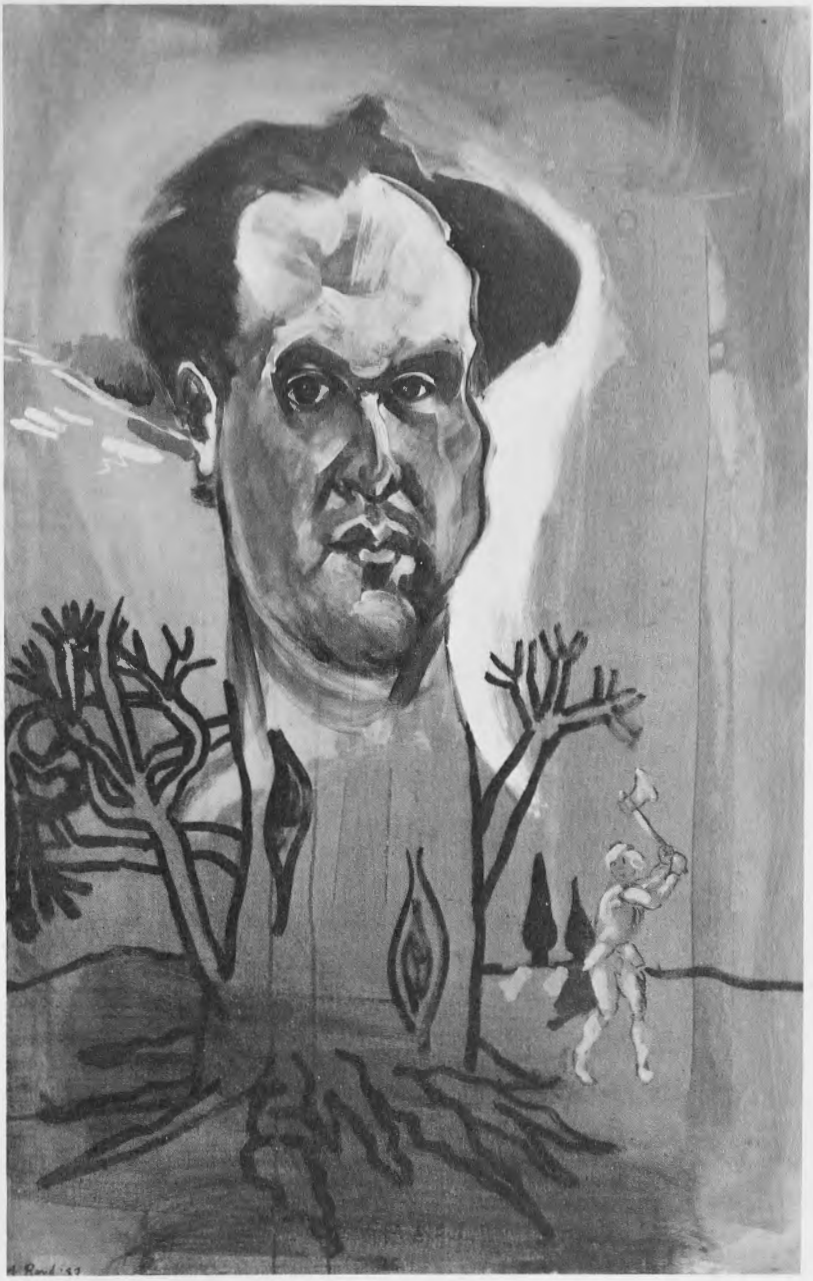
from MAINLY MERRIE SPIRITS #10, SAUSAGE PAINTER, 1986

70" x 42", acrylic on canvas



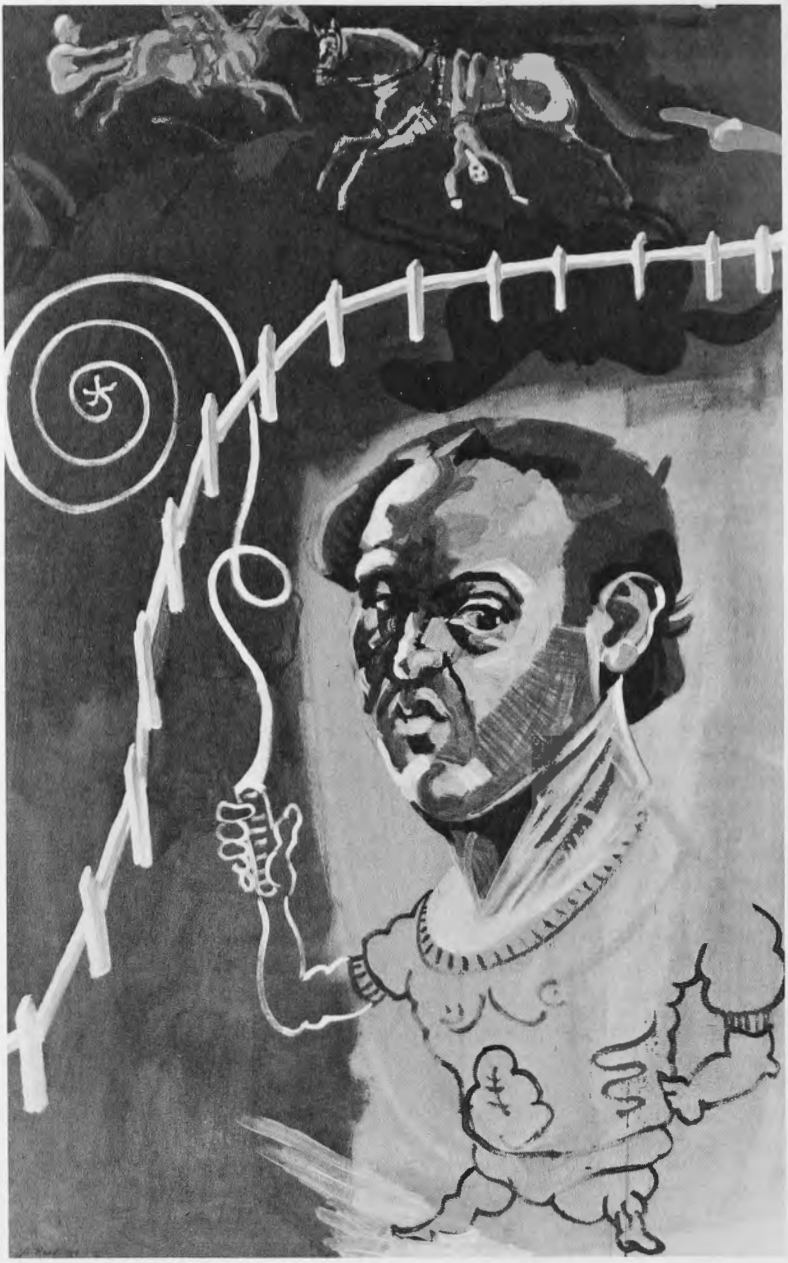
XIV, AFTER SONNETS TO ORPHEUS 2, 1987

62" x 38", acrylic on canvas



XV, AFTER SONNETS TO ORPHEUS 2, 1987

62" x 38", acrylic on canvas



XX, AFTER SONNETS TO ORPHEUS 2, 1987

62" x 38", acrylic on canvas
(This photo by Keith Fitzgerald)

MICHAEL PALMER

SIX HERMETIC SONGS

for Robert Duncan

Bring along the Makhent boat
for I have come to see Ostris
lord of the ansi *garment*

How did we measure
It says we measured up and down
from the sepia disk
to the crowded ship
of Odysseus

How did we measure
It says we measured
with a copper thread
from the plum flower
to the forgotten gift

Was the tain's smoke
equal to song
the vein of cedar
to a pin's bones
Burns each

earlier day
in its soundless weight
measured by the nets
of air
Go there

You can bring down a house with a sound.
Not to understand this.
But we builded it.

Not with periods (the
sentence) or any sense of design—
sight or sound.

Builded it while blind.
Rain came in.
Noises not ours.

Steps called walls.
Model of a house.
Work we had done before.

In—
harmonics as when
as children

still writing,
writed, written,
interrupted, begun.

The body in fog and the tongue
bracketed in its form

The words as if silvered—coated
and swallowed, cradled and erased

The marks whereby the body
was said to be a world

The walled rehearsals
The curve of abandon,

twinned and masked
The calls and careless fashionings,

digits thrown like dice
I don't think about that anymore

Send me my dictionary
Write how you are

There were nine grand pianos in my father's house
one a water object in my head
and one a ship of glass

one an eye on the end of a branch
and one a paint pot spilling red
There were live fandangos in the father's house

so that sleepers might sleep within the dance
and set their images to rest
Please tell me if you can

Did it snow pure snow in some father's house
and did the children chant Whether me this
then Whether me that

There was a winding stair in this father's house
climbing or falling no one would say
There were notebooks and nightbooks

and voices enclosed by a ring of bone
They were crying Wait Don't Wait
There were travelers standing at the gate

At the fever of tongues
the metron, with wandering eye

At the zero of streets and of windows
an arm in geometry

At the circus of nets
at the torn first
edge of an image
the unit of distance
between the eye and the lid

At the swarm of the messangers

At the storm of fine dust

At the pillars and the receiving paths

At the hidden roads of the disk

At the body of the speaking boat

The wrecked horn of the body
and a water voice

The horn of the body
and a slanted water voice

The notes against the gate
and the erasures at the gate

Mineral swimmers fixed
in a stone's milk

and the doorways of our disappearing
Whose night-songs and bridges

and prisms are these
Whose evens and odds

cats on high limbs
scorpions and swallows

What figures within the coil
tortoise and Bennu bird

lotus and hawk
palette plus ink-pot

NORMAN O. BROWN

METAMORPHOSES III: NARCISSUS (1989)

This occasion, in memoriam, inconsolable loss and the futile consolations of poetry: the theme of pastoral elegy. As in Milton's *Lycidas*—

> For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
> Young Lycidas,

Milton's *Lycidas,* or Ovid's *Metamorphoses.*

* * * * *

This is unfinished business. I started to write a Homage to Ovid, his *Metamorphoses.* It was to be the metamorphoses of his *Metamorphoses* through the ages down to our own times; a perpetual poem, or an eternal recurrence of archetypes; as if literature were all one book, just a footnote to Ovid; a book to end all books, like *Finnegans Wake* or Ovid's *Metamorphoses.*

I had done a Daphne, the nymph pursued by Apollo and saved by being transformed into a laurel; and an Actaeon, the hunter who saw Diana bathing, and was transformed into a stag and dismembered by his own hounds.

But Narcissus, another young hunter or shepherd destroyed by what he saw, the reflection of himself in the water—there I drowned, like Narcissus; lost in the endless replication of his image in world literature; overwhelmed by the abundance; as in Ovid Narcissus says *inopem me copia fecit,* "plenty made me poor." Or paralyzed by the proximity: *iste ego sum,* Could it be me? Narcissus is undone discovering his identity with his own reflection; we are undone discovering our identity with Narcissus, our

A lecture for Cowell College, University of California at Santa Cruz; in memory of Carl Deppe (September 12, 1965–March 6, 1985), student killed by a drunk driver.

identity made out of identifications. I is an Other; some primordial and universal schizophrenia, as if our first experience of the self were self-alienation.

From mirror unto mirror, an eternal recurrence of meaningless alternatives. Looking into the mirror and seeing nothing. Or *Lost in the Funhouse:* Ovid's *Metamorphoses* turning into black comedy. John Barth says, "He wishes he had never entered the funhouse. But he has. Then he wishes he were dead. But he's not. Therefore he will construct funhouses for others and be their secret operator—though he would rather be among the lovers for whom funhouses are designed."

And on the other hand there was the exhilarating discovery of *El Divino Narciso* by Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz; exhilarating in the way Ezra Pound describes the effect of a literary image or epiphany: "An 'Image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time. It is the presentation of such a 'complex' instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art."

Sor Juana was exhilarating, but still frustrating. It was as if she had said it all, or all I wanted to say; rendering my encyclopedic scholarship superfluous and vain. There was also a certain inhibiting awe in the presence of Sor Juana, a miraculous phenomenon altogether. A star of the first magnitude in European literature, whose entire life was spent in Mexico; in the 17th century, 1648–1695. Her encyclopedic intelligence, her audacity. The first feminist writer in the Western hemisphere; the vertiginous catastrophe of her meteoric end.

This unfinished business—what is there to say about Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, *El Divino Narciso?*

* * * * *

El Divino Narciso, an *auto sacramental:* sacred drama, or mystery play attached to the Catholic liturgy: for Corpus Christi Day, the festival of the Body and Blood.

The Divine Narcissus in America. In a stately masque, two by two, the prelude *(loa)* recapitulates the conquest of Mexico. Two personages, el Occidente, native American warrior or brave, and

la America, Indian woman in exotic native costume, are celebrating the festival of their "vegetation-deity," the great God of the Harvest, to the native Indian music of the Tocotin. It is their pagan Corpus Christi Day, an offering of human blood mixed with harvest seed, for the nourishment of the body and the purification of the soul. These two are confronted by their opposite numbers, Christian Zeal (Captain General, Conquistador) and Christian Religion (female). After the conquest by force, Christian Religion in dialogue with the Indians discovers a similarity between pagan ritual and Christian mystery, and follows the example of St. Paul who said to the men of Athens (*Acts* XVII, 23): "The God whom I proclaim is the one you already worship without knowing it." The Christian sacrament of the Eucharist celebrates the redemptive power of human blood, no less than the Mexican ritual, but without shedding fresh blood. Christ, offering himself to be eaten in the Eucharist, is the true vegetation-deity. The demonstration of this mystery must take the form of a visible representation of a metaphorical idea, an allegory, a sacramental drama, to be called *The Divine Narcissus,* recalling an earlier paganism, which, like Aztec religion, also contained demonic parodies of the mystery of the Christian Eucharist. Written in Mexico, the mystery play is to be performed in Madrid, in the presence of their Catholic majesties the King and Queen.

The confrontation between Christianity and Paganism in the New World repeats the original confrontation between Christianity and Classical culture in the Old World. The *auto sacramental* begins with an allegorical representation of the origin of Christianity. Judaism ("la Sinagoga") confronts Paganism ("la Gentilidad"): Judaism praises the beauty of God in the language of the *Psalms* ("Praise the Lord all creatures here below"), and Paganism, having its own Bible in Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* praises pastoral beauty of Narcissus ("Praise Narcissus, all ye flowers and fountains"). Human Nature, the mother of both, seeks to combine their voices, to make Christianity by combining Judaism and Paganism, and make Narcissus into Christ.

Herself plunging into the story and opening another level of play within the play, Human Nature discovers herself to be that very image of himself with which Narcissus seeks to be united. As the Bible tells us, Human Nature was made in the image of God;

but Human Nature has been so disfigured by the muddy waters of sin that the Divine Narcissus cannot recognize her as his own image. It is the moment of the Incarnation; Human Nature seeks a pure fountain in which her image will be cleansed and she can be reunited with the Divine Nature, the Divine Narcissus.

Into this cosmic drama reenacting the moment of the Incarnation, Satan must insert himself, to sow confusion. Continuing his bitter love-hatred of the Divine Narcissus who rejected him (the story of *Paradise Lost)* he is now bent on frustrating the love between the Divine Narcissus and his own image, Human Nature. Satan plunges into the drama, identifying his own tragedy with that of Echo in Ovid's story, the nymph who desperately tries to seduce Narcissus, but who, like Satan, can never do more than ape or echo the actions of God. In a reenactment of Christ's temptation in the wilderness *(Paradise Regained),* Narcissus has been fasting forty days and nights on a high mountain in Mexico; Echo offers him all the riches of the New World, and is steadfastly rejected.

Meanwhile, in a pastoral symphony combining Pagan and Biblical motifs, Human Nature in her longing for Narcissus becomes the distraught seeker of the *Song of Songs:* "I charge you, Nymphs that inhabit this flowery field, if ye find my beloved, tell him that I am sick with love." Narcissus is the Beloved who says "I am the flower of the field, the lily of the valley. My beloved is mine and I am his. He feedeth among the lilies." He is also the Good Shepherd of the New Testament, calling everywhere for his one lost sheep.

They meet at the fountain: a garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. A little fountain became a river, and there was light, and the sun and much water: this river is Esther, whom the king married; the river of Paradise, the Well of Life; the figure of the Virgin Mary, in whom the divine image and the human coalesce, the Virgin Mary of the Immaculate Conception. In the pure fountain Narcissus sees the reflection of Human Nature, and seeing in man his own image, falls in love with his own image. Open the crystal seal of this clear cold spring, that my love may enter in!

In love with his own perfection, perfect love makes the immortal mortal. "Love that has power to wound, in me has shown

its power: in love with my own image, from heaven I came to die." He suffers unto death. He humbled himself, consumed himself; tenderly melted in the sweet fire; died in the end in love's voluntary crucifixion. It is finished. Truly this was the Son of God.

Human Nature leads the pastoral world in lamentation, but there is the comfort of the Resurrection: he remains with us, transfigured into a white flower. Transparent disguise; jealous spouse of the soul, he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice. The pageantry of Corpus Christi displays the Fountain, and beside it the Chalice with the Host above it. See in the crystal margin of the clear fountain the fair white flower of which the Beloved said: "This is my body and my blood, martyred for your sakes. In memory of my death, repeat it."

* * * * *

What is there to say about *El Divino Narciso?* First the *loa:* the New World as a religious experience. Everywhere in the New World "A New Age Now Begins"; but in North America's City on the Hill the natives formed no part of it. We complacently think of Cortes and the Conquistadors in Mexico as more ruthless than our Frontier. But Sor Juana's *loa* dramatizes the different view from South of the Border. Christian Zeal and Christian Religion are separate personages. In the Catholic tradition Church and State, spiritual and temporal powers, remain distinct and even opposed. In the *loa,* after the conquest, Christian Zeal says Now insolent America must die. Christian Religion checks Christian Zeal, saying Wait, do not put her to death, I need America alive. I need America alive, said Christian Religion in Mexico. The Catholic Church used the key of baptism to open the doors of society to the Indians. "This possibility of belonging to a living order, even if it was at the bottom of the social pyramid, was cruelly denied to the Indians by the Protestants of New England."[1] That is Octavio Paz speaking: shall we contradict him?

The Pilgrims in North America—they too said a New Age Now Begins. For them it was a reenactment of the Old Testament. Pilgrims interpret themselves as another Mosaic community, in exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land, a holy nation like the Jews, with the same theological permission or rather commandment to exterminate the native inhabitants. *Deuteronomy* VII, 1–2, 6:

When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou:

And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them: thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them:

For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

In the Spiritual Conquest of Mexico—the historical drama corresponding to Sor Juana's *loa*—the original representatives of Christian Religion, saying to Christian Zeal, "Wait, do not put her to death: I need America alive," were the Franciscans. *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World.*[2] The advent of the first twelve Franciscan "Apostles" in Mexico City in 1524, an event of vast prophetic significance. It was the Second Coming not of Moses but of Christ. Francis and the Franciscans were imitating Christ. The book of the Bible being reenacted was not *Deuteronomy* but *Revelations.*

The pursuit of the millennium. I didn't know that Columbus was a Franciscan, and wrote a book titled "The Book of Prophecies"? Both Columbus and the leader of the Twelve Apostles in Mexico, Brother Martin de Valencia, acknowledged the inspiration of Joachim of Fiore, the revolutionary theologian who redirected Christian thought toward the eternal pursuit of the millennium.

Joachim, in the 12th century, opened Christianity to the thought of the historical future. Human history is religious history, divided into three stages: the age of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The age of the Father, the Old Testament, from Adam to Christ, is the age of patriarchal piety, located in patriarchal families. The age of the Son, the New Testament, from Christ down to the present, is the age of ecclesiastical or priestly piety, located in Churches, and prescribing the active life of good works.

In the future age of the Spirit, ecclesiastical piety will be superseded by mendicant, monastic piety, now made universal by outpouring of the Spirit. All men—I follow Joachim in omitting the mention of women as a separate category—all men will practice apostolic poverty and lead lives of contemplation. It will be a higher form of Christianity, a new Gospel, which will spiritualize the meaning of the New Testament even as the New Testament spiritualized the meaning of the Old Testament. Thus, it will be the Second Coming of Christ, and the Eternal Gospel prophesied in the *Book of Revelations:* "And what is this Gospel? That of which Jesus speaks in *Revelations:* I saw an angel flying in the midst of heaven, and he had the eternal Gospel. And what is in this Gospel? All that goes beyond the Gospel of Christ. For the letter kills and the spirit gives life."[3]

The Franciscans were certain that St. Francis was the fulfillment of Joachim's prophecy of a Messianic leader to inaugurate the new age. The Franciscan missionaries were certain that the Discovery of the New World was the unfolding of the drama of the end of the World as prophesied in the *Book of Revelations;* their task was to realize eschatology in actual history, to bring about the end of the history. "The Gospel must first be published among all the nations" *(Mark* XIII, 10). In the Apocalyptic as opposed to the Exodus perspective, the natives of North America are the lost tribes of Israel; or, if that cannot be proved, at least welcome guests at the final apocalyptic banquet at which all nations will be gathered into one body: and there shall be one fold, one shepherd *(John* XVII, 21). Franciscan missionaries saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven and settling in Mexico; an evangelical utopia based not only on the perception of America as the rediscovered Garden of Eden, but also on the uncorrupted character of the noble Indian savages. The radical innocence exemplified in the angelic Indians opened up the possibility of a more perfect realization of Christianity in the New World, in an Indian church administered by Franciscan millenarians. The New World could attain angelic perfection while Europe, apocalyptically speaking, would go to Hell.

The disastrous history of the New World. *The Indian Ecclesiastical History* by the Franciscan Jeronimó de Mendieta, written in the 1590s, but publication suppressed till 1870, long after the end

of Spanish rule in Mexico, records the defeat of the dream of an evangelical millennium, an Indian Church, defeated by the old idol of Mammon, the accursed love of gold which Christ came into the world to overthrow.

But hope creates from its own wreck the things it contemplates. The new spiritual men of the 17th century were the Jesuits; they too, like the Franciscans, seeing themselves as the fulfillment of the prophecies of Joachim of Fiore. The utopian dream took a new form: the dream of an oecumenical Christian order embracing all religions. Franciscan fundamentalism was succeeded by Jesuit syncretism. "Syncretism": the attempted union or reconciliation of conflicting parties or principles in philosophy or religion; "almost always in a derogatory sense"; as if it were a utopian project, unrealistic, if not unprincipled. The word comes to us from Plutarch's treatise on *philadelphia,* that is to say, brotherly love. When differences arise among brothers, he says, we must imitate the practice of the Cretans, who though they often quarrelled and fought with one another, made up their differences and united when outside enemies attacked; this was what they called their "syncretism."

In the service of the oecumenical aspirations of the Counter-Reformation, the Jesuits developed a sophisticated doctrine of the pre-established harmony between all religions, justifying the Jesuit missionary practice of accommodation, i.e., syncretistic adaptation of Christian revelation to local language, belief and custom. It was not a new theology but a renewal of an ancient tradition. The early Fathers of the Church had arrived at the notion that the reception of the Gospel among the heathen had been prepared by prefigurations, anticipations of Christianity in paganism. Seventeenth century Jesuit intellectuals modernized this idea by combining it with the Hermetic strain in Renaissance humanism: the notion of a primordial revelation of occult wisdom identified with the name of Hermes Trismegistus and with Egyptian hieroglyphs.

There was Father Athanasius Kircher—more frequently cited by Sor Juana than any other contemporary—Professor of Mathematics at the Roman College, the hub of the Jesuit order in Rome, author of *Oedipus Aegyptiacus,* which expounds Egyptian hieroglyphics as instituted by Hermes Trismegistus and constituting symbolic pictures of divine and universal truths.[4] And there was

in Mexico, Athanasius Kircher's Mexican correspondent and Sor Juana's friend, Don Carlos de Siguenza y Gongora, who laid the intellectual foundations for Mexican Creole national consciousness, by finding a place for the native Indian Aztec civilization in a Christian scheme of universal history; syncretism. Just listen to the titles of some of his books: *"The Phoenix of the West, the Apostle St. Thomas, found under the name of Quetzalcoatl among the ashes of ancient traditions preserved on Toltec stones and teomoxtles and in Teochichimec and Mexican songs"*; and *"Primavera Indiana—The Indian springtime, sacro-historical poem, idea of the most holy Mary of Guadalupe."* The Dark, little Indian, Virgin of Guadalupe, who took the place of the Aztec Mother Goddess Tonantsin at Tepeyac, the most potent manifestation of syncretism in the New World. The Indian Springtime: a new age now begins, with the foundation of the Virgin of Guadalupe; identified with the woman of *Revelations* XII, I. "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars."[5]

This baroque synthesis—the culture which produced Sor Juana—preserved the core of Joachite millennarianism in a new form. In this new form it prepared the way, in the next age, for the heavenly city of the 18th century philosophers; the Enlightenment apotheosis of progress; the Enlightenment dream of universal history from a cosmopolitan point of view; the Enlightenment science of comparative religion. The work of syncretism, in the service of world unification—to gather the limbs of Osiris—still goes on. Sor Juana's *auto sacramental* dramatizes the three principal players: pagan or heathen religion; Hebrew or Christian religion; and classical mythology, the reinterpretation of pagan religion by the free spirit of the poetic imagination, as authorized by the example of Ovid.

Christ as the Divine Narcissus; syncretism. Western Civilization—that old bag—a synthesis of Hebraism and Hellenism, or Christianity and Classical Culture; the mediaeval synthesis. My original project was a Western Civilization project: the metamorphoses of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* inside Western Civilization. Daphne and Actaeon had already led me to the mediaeval *Ovide moralisé*. Ovid moralized is Ovid christianized: Actaeon dismem-

bered by his hounds is Christ crucified; or (even more unlikely!) Daphne transformed into a laurel wreath round Apollo's head is the Virgin Mary round Christ incarnate in her womb.

Daphne, Actaeon, Narcissus: these quaint mediaeval Christological interpretations, these baroque conceits—they go too far. There is a leap of faith. *Credo quia absurdum,* the theologians say; but also poetry is impossibility made credible: the circle squared, the opposites unified, in the end; in an eschatological (anagogic), or utopian, or beatific vision. It is not just "Christianity and classical culture," abstract scholastic categories; it is as if this antithesis recapitulated deep contradictions in our "Western Way of Life": the contradiction between sacred and profane love; between the body and the soul; the physical and the spiritual; between love and death.

The vehicle which carries Sor Juana in the *Divine Narcissus* to the threshold of heaven, the vehicle which mediates the reconciliation of opposites, is not the *Book of Revelations* but the *Song of Songs.* The *Song of Songs,* the Song of Solomon—

> The unexpressive nuptial song
> In the blest Kingdoms meek of joy and love.

The miracle is the marriage of the idyllic Ovidian pastoral with the Paradisical landscape of the *Song of Songs;* a transubstantiation of the pastoral. In the footsteps of her namesake, whose name she chose for herself when she joined his order, the order of Reformed Carmelites, Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz in the footsteps of San Juan de la Cruz.

First the Franciscans, then the Jesuits, then the Carmelites. Carmelite mysticism, a different spiritual elite: "Our desire is that they should be like mirrors, like shining lamps, glaring torches, brilliant stars, illuminating and guiding the wanderers in this dark world. . .raised above themselves by raptures both ineffable and indescribable."[6] Raised above themselves by raptures both ineffable and indescribable: Conquistadors, at heaven's gate; in Dionysian delirium, or Sufi ecstasy.

San Juan de la Cruz, St. John of the Cross; the *Spiritual Canticle.* Songs between the Soul and the Bridegroom; a pastoral

dialogue in which the Lover and the Beloved converse and make love among the woods, mountains and rivers; as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses.*

> Shepherds, you who wander
> There by sheepfolds to the summit,
> If you chance to see
> The one I most desire
> Tell him I am sick, I suffer and I die.

The identity of sacred and profane love. The lyric poetry of San Juan is based on a fusion of three ingredients: the exalted rapture of the *Song of Songs,* the refined, sublimated eroticism of Renaissance neo-classical poetry, and the vulgar love-poetry of the street-music, the pop songs of the day, the rhythms of which are preserved in his lyrics. The subject of the pop songs was nearly always love, but religious writers interpreted them *a lo divino,* that is, as expressing love for Christ or the Virgin. In prison (imprisoned by the unreformed Carmelites), where the first great burst of poetry came to him, one evening, when he was in very low spirits, he heard a voice singing a *villancico* (popular ballad) in the street outside, and it sent him at once into ecstasy. The words were

> Muérome de amores
> Carillo. Que haré?
> —Que te mueras, alahé.

> "I am dying of love, darling. What
> shall I do?—Die, hey, hey!"

Overcoming the antitheses of sacred and profane love. It could have been Madonna. One of San Juan's great lyrics has the refrain *que muero por que no muero:* I die because I do not die.

Interpreting *a lo divino,* we get *El divino Narciso.* There was an anonymous ordinary love-poem, in the pastoral mode:

> A shepherd boy, all alone, was suffering
> Far away from all pleasure and joy,

Every thought on his shepherdess lay
His heart deeply wounded by love.

The shepherd boy said, "Ah woe to the one
Who has taken my love away;
She does not wish to enjoy me or stay."
His heart deeply wounded by love.

San Juan made a few changes and added a stanza:

In the end climbing high on a tree
He opened his lovely arms full and wide;
Held by them he stayed there and died
His heart deeply wounded by love.

The song is included in San Juan's collected poems under the title "Canciones a lo divino de Cristo y el alma;" "Verses *a lo divino* on Christ and the soul."[7]

Protestant heretics need the great protestants and heretics who stayed inside the Church, Joachim of Fiore, Francis of Assisi, San Juan de la Cruz. Intoxicated by the saint's ecstasy; not knowing what we are getting into; "all knowledge transcending"—*entréme donde no supe*—we may not realize how heterodox it all is.

"Let us enjoy ourselves, my love,
And let us go to see ourselves in thy beauty,
To the mountain and to the hillside
Where flows the pure water;
Let us enter more deeply into the thicket."

This could be an erotic moment in Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* Jupiter incarnate as mortal man making improper advances to a nymph. Or it could be from a duet between the Divine Narcissus and Human Nature. But it is from San Juan's *Spiritual Canticle,* and his own prose commentary goes as follows:

And let us go to see ourselves in thy beauty.

. . .that is, that I may be so transformed in Thy beauty that, being alike in beauty, we may both see ourselves in Thy

beauty, since I shall have Thy own beauty; so that, when one of us looks at the other, each may see in the other his beauty, the beauty of both being Thy beauty alone, and I being absorbed in Thy beauty; and thus I shall see Thee in Thy beauty and Thou wilt see me in Thy beauty; and I shall see myself in Thee in Thy beauty; and Thou wilt see Thyself in me in Thy beauty; so that thus I may be like to Thee in Thy beauty and Thou mayest be like to me in Thy beauty, and my beauty may be Thy beauty, and Thy beauty my beauty; and thus I shall be Thou in Thy beauty and Thou wilt be I in Thy beauty, because Thy beauty itself will be my beauty, and thus we shall each see the other in Thy beauty.

The rhapsody goes on and on like a Sufi chant inducing ecstasy; and the Spanish word *hermosura* is twice as long and twice as seductive.

"Giving birth in beauty," Plato said. We become what we behold. We are saved by what we see. Redemption is vision, not a vicarious redemption of a literal victim on a literal cross. In *The Divine Narcissus* the crucifixion is the contemplation of the beauty. Only as an aesthetic phenomenon is existence and the world eternally justified. That is Nietzsche speaking. But I take my theology from William Blake. Blake: Protestant, mystic, but also revolutionary; not just the *Song of Songs,* but also the *Book of Revelations* and the spirit of Joachim of Fiore. Blake's stunning heterodoxy.

Prayer is the Study of Art.
Praise is the Practise of Art.
Fasting &c., all relate to Art.
The outward Ceremony is Antichrist.
The Eternal Body of Man is The Imagination, that is, God himself
, Jesus: we are his Members.
The Divine Body
It manifests itself in his Works of Art (In Eternity All is Vision).

Eternity is the eternal pursuit of the millennium. Eternity is in love with the productions of time.

In San Juan there is the Dark Night:

> *amado con amada*
> *amada en el Amado transformada!*

Lover and Beloved, complete union with God; identification with the Absolute, that crime for which some of the great Sufi masters were put to death. Yet San Juan explicitly says, "God absorbs the soul above all being in the being of God, deifying its substance and making it divine." Deifying, *endiosando:* enthusiasm in the full etymological sense of the word, "en-god-ment." Enthusiasm: the word is Greek and comes to us from the Greek god Dionysus. San Juan's heterodoxy should be called Dionysian rather than pantheist.

A heterodox redemption requires a heterodox creation. The mirror of Narcissus is not the mirror of vanity, or the Fall, but the mirror of creation. What is implicit in San Juan de la Cruz is explicit in the mystical tradition of Islam, in Sufism; in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi. The Breath of Creation is the "Sigh of Compassion," Allah al-Rahman, yearning to be known: "I was a hidden Treasure and I yearned to be known. Then I created creatures in order to be known by them."[8] God becomes a mirror in which the spiritual man contemplates his own reality, and man in turn becomes the mirror in which God contemplates his names and qualities.

The story of Creation, *Genesis* I, 2: "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Reinterpreted spiritually, *a lo divino,* that will be God as Narcissus, imagining his own image on the face of the waters. A Gnostic text, preserved in Coptic Christianity, a meditation on the first words of the Gospel according to St. John, "In the beginning was the Word" says "He 'thought' His own likeness when He saw it in the pure Light-water that surrounded Him. And His Thought became efficacious and made herself manifest. Out of the splendor of the Light she stood herself before him: the Light that is the image of the Light, the likeness of the Invisible. . . .She is the first Thought, His likeness."[9]

There actually is a sequence of poems by San Juan de la Cruz, titled "Ballad on the Gospel 'In the beginning was the word' about

the Most Holy Trinity" in which he actually dares, like Blake, to give in popular ballad form *(romance)* his own version of creation. It is pure Gnosticism, or Sufism; I follow the commentary of Gerald Brenan, no Gnostic or Sufi or even mystic; he wrote the best book on the Spanish Civil War. The Three Persons of the Trinity though distinct in substance are made one by love; this love, which in the manner of an electric generator they manufacture among themselves, spills over and manifests itself in the creation of the world. In ballad-style dialogue the Father, out of his immense love for the Son, offers to give him a Bride, and on his acceptance the Creation takes place. The whole of Creation from Angels to Man makes up the body of the bride of Christ, but there is a distinction: whereas in the upper compartment of the palace the angels possess the Bridegroom in full enjoyment, in the lower compartment the marriage remains unconsummated. There is no mention of Eve's sin, or of the Fall. Human Nature was created inferior to the angels, we are not told why—but endowed with faith and hope. The rest of the poem develops the long history of this hope until with the Incarnation the Son enters the womb of the Bride and the original purpose of Creation, the marriage of Divine with Human Nature, is finally fulfilled.

ENDNOTES

[1] Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (New York, 1961).

[2] J.L. Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley, 1970).

[3] J. Lafaye, *Quetzalcoatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness 1513–1813* (Chicago, 1976), p. 32. Cf. M. Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (London, 1976).

[4] Octavio Paz, *Sor Juana* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), pp. 165–166.

[5] Lafaye, pp. 63–64.

[6] Gerald Brenan, *St. John of the Cross* (Cambridge, 1973), p. 12.

[7] Brenan, *pp.* 32, 126.

[8] H. Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi* (Princeton, 1969), pp. 114–115.

[9] H. Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston, 1963), p. 106.

CONTRIBUTOR NOTES

Early this year, Black Sparrow Press published CHARLES OLSON'S *A Nation of Nothing but Poetry,* "poems omitted from *The Collected Poems,* including alternate versions of poems published there." ELIZABETH WILLIS has just finished a series of poems entitled *A/O* and is completing a manuscript on Pre-Raphaelite painting and devotion. KAREN KELLEY has completed a first volume of poems, "Anonymous Woman." She has work appearing in *Paper Air* and *Central Park.* Among DONALD KUSPIT'S many publications is a monograph on Leon Golub, Rutgers University Press, 1985. MYUNG MI KIM'S poems have appeared in *Ironwood, The Antioch Review,* and *How(ever).* PAT PHILLIPS is currently studying English Literature at UC Berkeley. MICHEL DEGUY, who lives in Paris, is the editor of *Po&Sie,* the most consistently valuable French poetry magazine. His *Given Giving: Selected Poems,* University of California Press, 1984, is now available in paperback. SARAH BARBOUR received her Ph.D. from Cornell in 1985; she teaches at Wake Forest. VICTORIA BRIDGES received her Ph.D. from Yale in 1987; she is currently translating Deguy in Paris. JEROME ROTHENBERG'S *Khurbn and Other Poems* will be published by New Directions, Fall, 1989. TYREE GUYTON, who works with his wife, Karen, and his grandfather, initiated "The Heidelberg Project" in 1986. They have "decorated" five houses to date. Guyton has recently had shows at the Cade Gallery in Royal Oaks, and Le Minotaure in Ann Arbor. ROBERT TURNEY is a freelance photographer living in East Lansing, Michigan, with his wife, Diane Wakoski. Six portraits by Turney of American writers appeared in *Sulfur* #23. CLAYTON ESHLEMAN'S *Novices: A Study of Poetic Apprenticeship* has recently been published by The Arundel Press. Greywolf published ELIOT WEINBERGER'S translation of Vincente Huidobro's *Altazor* in 1988. GEORGE KALAMARAS' poems have appeared in *Bluefish* and *Caliban.* His two chapbooks are *Heart Without End* (Leaping Mountain Press) and *Beneath The Breath* (Tilton House). MARTHA RONK LIFSON'S *Desire in L.A.* will be published by the University of Georgia Press, Fall, 1989. LEON GOLUB shows at the Barbara Gladstone Gallery in NYC. The

companion poem, "Bread & Wine," to ROBERT MARTEAU'S essay in this issue, appeared in *Sulfur* #7. A.C. GOODSON is the author of *Verbal Imagination: Coleridge and the Language of Modern Criticism,* Oxford University Press, 1988. PETER REDGROVE is a practicing alchemist; two recent books (the first coauthored with Penelope Shuttle) are *The Wise Wound,* and *The Black Goddess,* both with Grove Press. An extraordinary interview with the Cuban author JOSE LEZAMA LIMA (1910–1976) appeared in *Sulfur* #24. Lezama Lima is one of the 20th century masters whose prose-poetry and essays are beginning to appear in English via JAMES IRBY'S meticulous translations (also see "Ten Prose Poems" in *Sulfur* #3). Irby teaches Latin American Literature at Princeton. PRISCILLA SNEFF'S poems are from a manuscript entitled "Ars Memoriae." AARON SHURIN'S newest book is *A's Dream,* O Books, 1989. JOHN YAU'S *Radiant Silhouette: New and Selected Work 1974–1988* will be published by Black Sparrow, Fall, 1989. MICHAEL PALMER'S *Sun* was published by North Point in 1988. Two companion essays to NORMAN O. BROWN'S "Metamorphoses III" are "Metamorphoses I: Daphne" *(Open Poetry,* 1973) and "Metamorphoses II: Actaeon" *(American Poetry Review,* Nov/Dec, 1972).

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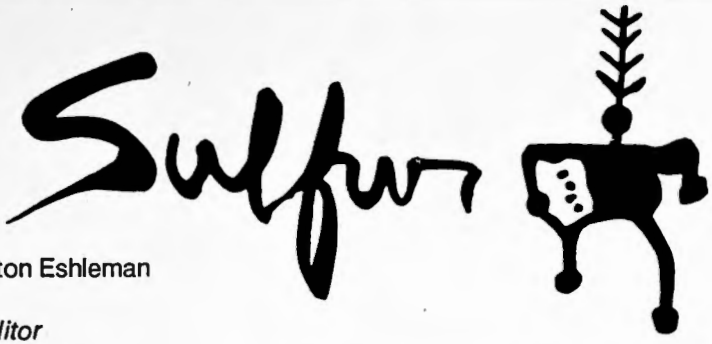

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